VOLUME 7• NUMBER 1
SPRING/SUMMER 2024

# JAZZ & CULTURE

VOLUME 7, NUMBER 1 • 2024

# JAZZ & CULTURE

## ARTICLES

1 **Archival Absences and Conditional Listening: How Jazz Shaped Experimental Music in 1960s Japan**
*Miki Kaneda*

26 **“A Meditation Among Drums”: A Black Archive of Wandering at the *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency* Exhibit**
*Kehinde Alonge*

45 **“Jazz Steel”: The Vibrancy of Rooms and the Acoustics of Genre at Jazz at Lincoln Center**
*Tom Wetmore*

87 **!We Are Not Jazz¡ Liminal Jazz in the Music of La Distritofónica, Bogotá, Colombia**
*Diego Alberto Gómez Nieto*

## ORAL HISTORY

105 **Klezmer in My Life: Tyshawn Sorey**
*Interview by Mark Slobin*

## POETRY

111 **Sojourn**
**Reverie**
**Antidote to Midnight Grief**
*Kira Tucker*

114 **Contributors to This Issue**

*Jazz and Culture* (print ISSN: 2578-4765 and online: 2578-4773) is published biannually in the spring/summer and fall/winter by the University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820-6903 (www.press.uillinois.edu), for the Jazz Studies Department at the University of Pittsburgh.

© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

**Subscription Rates**
Individual subscriptions are $30 for print or electronic only and $40 for both print and electronic. Institutional rates are $100 for print only, $110 for electronic only, and $130 for both print and electronic. Add $10 for postage to Canada or Mexico and $15 for postage to all other non-U.S. locations. For more information on subscriptions or for general inquiries, please contact Journals Department, University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820-6903 or journals@uillinois.edu.

**Postmaster:** Send change of address notices to University of Illinois Press, 1325 S. Oak Street, Champaign, IL 61820-6903.

For authorization to photocopy from *Jazz and Culture* for uses exceeding those permitted by sections 107 and 108 of U.S. Copyright Law, contact the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923. The CCC will send an invoice for those permission fees. Permissions given above do not extend to copying for advertising or promotional purposes or to creating new collected works.

**Editor-In-Chief**
Dr. Michael C. Heller, University of Pittsburgh

Poetry Editor: Steffan Triplett
Oral History Editor: Veronica Johnson
Book Reviews Editor: Dhiren Panikker
Media Reviews Editor: Rami Stucky

**Editorial Board**
Dean Larry E. Davis, University of Pittsburgh
Dr. Dwight Andrews, Emory University
Mr. Herb Boyd, Author/Journalist, City College of New York
Dr. Kent Engelhardt, Youngstown State University
Dr. Gary Fienberg, The College of New Jersey
Dr. Farah Jasmine Griffin, Columbia University
Dr. Vijay Iyer, Harvard University
Dr. Travis A. Jackson, University of Chicago
Dr. Robin D.G. Kelley, UCLA
Dr. George E. Lewis, Columbia University
Dr. Portia K. Maultsby, Indiana University
Dr. Ingrid Monson, Harvard University
Mr. Lester Monts, University of Michigan
Mr. Dave Pistolesi, University of Pittsburgh (retired)
Dr. Guthrie Ramsey, University of Pennsylvania
Dr. Robert Sacre, University of Liege
Mr. Ed Sarath, University of Michigan

**University of Pittsburgh Jazz Studies Program Assistant**
Lauren Upchurch

**University of Pittsburgh Jazz Studies Core Faculty**
Chad Taylor
Aaron J. Johnson
Michael C. Heller
Yoko Suzuki

**In Memoriam**
Nathan Davis (1937–2018)
Geri Allen (1957–2017)

# Archival Absences and Conditional Listening: How Jazz Shaped Experimental Music in 1960s Japan

*Miki Kaneda*

## *Abstract*

*Between 1960 and 1962, jazz dominated programming at the Sogetsu Art Center (SAC), a central incubator of experimental artistic practices in Tokyo. But today, we hear very little about jazz at the SAC, much less the significance of jazz for the Japanese avant-garde in general. Through a study of the listening practices at the jazz events at the SAC, I argue that centering jazz in a narrative about early 1960s Japanese experimental practices provokes a rethinking of narratives about the history of Japanese experimental practices not only in terms of genre and aesthetics but in terms of specific practices—collective listening in this case. A study of jazz events at the SAC demonstrates how Japanese experimental practices developed through an awareness of Euro-American avant-garde traditions as well as the creative innovations and traditions of African American music. Yet, the emphasis on listening suggests that awareness does not mean that the Japanese avant-garde was determined by the West. The article outlines a history of collective listening in Japan over the twentieth century. Then, two case studies consider how documentation of the jazz events at the SAC reveals tensions within the spaces of collective listening, falling along fault lines of race and gender. Listening was a collective creative process with an experience that significantly shaped experimental practices in Japan. Yet, as these practices produced their new creative possibilities, they also formed their own conditions of inclusion and exclusion.*

**Jazz & Culture** Volume 7, Number 1 Spring/Summer 2024
© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

Between 1960 and 1962, jazz events dominated the programming of the Sogetsu Art Center (SAC, active 1958–1971), an incubator of experimental music, film, and performance in Tokyo.[1] The SAC can be located among an assemblage of several significant organizations that shaped the Japanese avant-garde over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, which included the chanson café Ginpari, the networks around *shōgekijō* (small underground theater) such as Tenjōsajiki, and the film-centered art space Theatre Scorpio (Sasori-za). While each of these are important spaces for the intersection of music and the broader Japanese avant-garde art community, the SAC holds significance as a space specifically designed for musical performance. Judging by the volume of jazz events held in the early years of the SAC, it would seem natural that jazz should hold a central place in the story of postwar Japanese experimental musical practices. When the number of jazz events at the SAC peaked in 1960, their frequency outnumbered all other music, film, and performance events combined. Between the two series devoted to jazz in that year—Etosetora to Jazu no Kai (Etcetera and Jazz Gathering, which ran from 1959–1960) and Sogetsu Music Inn (1960–1963)—a total of eighteen jazz events took place. By comparison, in that same year, there were a total of just six Sogetsu Contemporary Series events, which primarily showcased contemporary classical music, or *gendai ongaku* in Japanese.[2] Under SAC Director Teshigahara Hiroshi's vision, the SAC actively harnessed jazz for its popularity among artists. In the words of critic Akiyama Kuniharu, "Hiroshi saw [the jazz series] Etosetora as an event that brought different artists together and, in this way, a crucial step towards new cross-genre collaborations."[3] The artists frequenting the SAC combined their interests in jazz with attentiveness to trends in contemporary international artistic movements.

And yet, with a few notable exceptions, most prominently in a research article by Watanabe Miho, neither histories of Japanese experimental music nor histories of Japanese jazz make much of the connection between jazz and the experimental arts.[4] This article builds on work by Watanabe and others but also draws attention to collective listening as the key practice that brought the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde and jazz together at SAC events. By focusing on the listening practices and transactions at the jazz events at the SAC, I argue that centering jazz in a narrative about early 1960s Japanese experimental practices provokes a rethinking of narratives about the history of Japanese experimental practices not only in terms of genre and aesthetics but in terms of specific practices—collective listening in this case. A study of jazz events at the SAC demonstrates how Japanese musicians interested in experimental practices looked not only to Euro-American avant-garde traditions following in the lineage of European classical music but equally to the creative innovations and traditions of African American music. In this sense, this article complicates narratives about the intersections of jazz and *gendai ongaku*, adding a Japanese angle to a body of scholarship that provides evidence of overlaps and exchanges between musicians working in the fields of jazz, avant-garde, and experimental music.[5] However, the genuine interests in jazz among the participants in jazz events were at times in tension with the self-image of the Japanese experimentalists as innovators and key players in the transnational avant-garde, shaped in part by a deep awareness of the Euro-American avant-garde. By focusing on the practices of listening at the SAC, I suggest that this *awareness* of movements abroad does not mean that the Japanese avant-garde was *determined* by the West.

One tension that needs to be addressed is encapsulated in the terminology that separated "jazz" from the "avant-garde" at the SAC, even as jazz was constitutive of the formation of Japanese experimental practices in the 1960s. At the SAC, the word jazz referred to the music conventionally associated with US jazz around 1960. This included musical styles with Black US-American roots, ranging from New Orleans jazz, swing, bebop, and modern jazz. There was also an understanding of precursors to jazz that included the blues, gospel, and work songs. At the same time, jazz was also used in contradistinction from terms like *zen-ei* (avant-garde) and *gendai ongaku* (contemporary music), which referred to the experimental practices of the Euro-American avant-garde. Members of the Japanese avant-garde seemed to recognize the radical potential of jazz to transform experimental approaches, yet the distinctions persisted. The use of the terms *avant-garde* and *zen-ei* unmodified at the SAC thus denoted more specifically the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde. When I retain the separation of the terms *avant-garde* and *jazz* in this article, I do so to align with their uses at the SAC. I recognize the problematic nature of this terminology, which forecloses the possibility of a notion of avant-garde jazz as a musical genre that is rooted in a history of jazz but also located at the frontlines of creative innovation. At the same time, the distinction between jazz and the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde at the SAC, in this article, is concerned not with marking the borders between genres but with understanding the conditions of social practices surrounding jazz in twentieth-century Japan, rooted in collective listening. As I discuss in more detail below, this listening practice developed over the course of decades in the early and mid-twentieth century and eventually intersected with the creative activities of musicians and artists interested in a range of international artistic movements.

The connection between listening as a collective practice and developments in Japanese experimental practices remains undertheorized in discussions of the history of the Japanese musical avant-garde. Yet, I concur with David Novak, who has suggested that in Japan, "listening to recordings is the crucible of modern musical creativity, and its practice is filled with as much interpretable meaning as the sonic objects themselves."[6] The practices of listening at the SAC also align with what Jonathan Sterne has described as "audile techniques," which are a "concrete set of limited and related practices of listening and practical orientations toward listening."[7] In the case of the SAC, these are skills that listeners honed as part of a process of self-fashioning as jazz connoisseurs and creatively curious artists. While Sterne's discussion of audile techniques focuses on the genealogy of listening as a form of self-discipline in relation to new sound technologies, the jazz events at the SAC depended fundamentally on the sociality of listening not only to cultivate audile techniques but also to collectively shape new art forms that included film and visual art in combination with sound. At the SAC's jazz events, listening served as a vehicle by which Japanese musicians and artists sought to absorb, study, imitate, and imagine practices of an international avant-garde that were not readily available to Japanese artists through live performance. My analysis of the creative agency of listening at the SAC in shaping experimental practices aligns with Novak's assessment of listening to records as part of a creative process. Yet, in the archival recordings of SAC events, the conversations, the banter between pieces, the laughter from the audience, and a joke from the authoritative voice on stage all reveal ways in which the creative practice of listening included policing notions about the status of jazz in relation to the avant-garde. Listening and audile techniques at the SAC in this sense shaped Japanese experimental practices not only as vehicles for individual creativity but also social power—they produced ways to collectively establish boundaries about aesthetics as well as authority among the community of artists and listeners.

At the same time, an analysis of listening as a social practice at the SAC reveals the conditionality of listening. That is, at the SAC, racialized and gendered bodies of jazz—both Japanese and American—complicated how members of the Japanese avant-garde listened to the music, and, importantly, who deserved to be listened to. Roshanak Kheshti has theorized the uneven relations of power at the intersection of race and gender in the process of listening to recordings through the notion of "aural imaginaries."[8] For Kheshti, the aural imaginary is a site of "interaction with the other that is at times voyeuristic, at times sadistic, and at times narcissistic."[9] Kheshti deploys the term "aural imaginary" to describe the relations of power produced in the space between a listener and the imagined, fetishized body of the performer on a recording. At the site of collective listening, a racial and gendered difference from the normative (i.e., Japanese cisgender male) listener threatened the legitimacy of the SAC avant-garde. Kheshti's notion of the aural imaginary elucidates the processes by which normative Japanese male listeners established a sense of masterful connoisseurship through an aural voyeurism of jazz conflated with the Black male body.

Whereas the figure of the Black male body was located at the sites of fetishized listening, Japanese women were key mediators delivering information and access to insider accounts about US American jazz. Yet, their female, Japanese bodies complicated the aural imaginaries about appropriate bodies of jazz. Being listened to as a Japanese woman in the space of jazz was conditional, made audible and legible only as a woman, which in the homosocial spaces of listening relegated women to the margins. The 1960s Japanese avant-garde did include several prominent transgender and queer performers such as the chanson-performer Miwa Akihiro, celebrated for his performances of womanhood. There were also highly acclaimed artists in dance, literature, and film whose works explored homoeroticism and nonbinary representations of gender such as Hijikata Tastusmi and Mishima Yukio. However, the existence of these artists cannot be taken as proof of a general acceptance of gender and sexual diversity or the absence of gender-based discrimination. While this discussion is beyond the scope of this article, I contend that a celebration of forms of sexuality understood as deviant (and therefore radical) in a very limited number of artists coexisted with entrenched discourses and practices of sexism and misogyny.

This article proceeds in two parts. First, I outline a history of collective listening in Japan that links to practices of collective listening at the SAC. What emerges is a narrative that challenges assumptions about Japanese experimental practices as mere offshoots or imitations of the West, without denying that imitation was indeed a key part of the practices related to collective listening. Then, I analyze documentation from two Sogetsu Music Inn jazz events as a starting point to expose the tensions within the spaces of collective listening along the fault lines of race and gender. The first of these two, which took place on February 25, 1960, featured the Black American scholar and musician Silas Mosley. The second took place on January 25, 1961. In the latter, I focus on the appearance of two Japanese women: the jazz connoisseur Idemitsu Mako and the pianist/composer Toshiko Akiyoshi. The segments that featured Idemitsu and Akiyoshi contrasted greatly, yet each exposed the gendered structures of inclusion and exclusion in the practice of collective listening at the SAC. The case studies in this article reveal how listening and imitation were key practices that consciously and unconsciously challenged the norms of the Euro-American avant-garde. At the same time, within the space of the SAC, practices of listening and imitation existed alongside tensions in relation to hegemonic Euro-American notions of experimental practice that privilege individual originality and a genealogical relationship to the Western European canon. The first part of this article thus focuses on acts of listening as a collective creative practice of listening, which may be described as acts of *listening for*—for pleasure, for learning, and for deepening knowledge about the possibility of experimental practice. By contrast, the second part sheds light on what might be described as exclusionary practices of *listening against* other possibilities of listening. These are each aspects of a listening practice that I call conditional listening. As a practice of knowledge-making, listening developed as part of a social technology shaping expectations in the sense of what Philip J. Deloria has described as "dense economies of meaning, representation, and act."[10] Collective listening worked to establish and reinforce expectations about what counts as "good" jazz and who adjudicates those standards. These standards emerged from a structure that established a sense of collectivism through acts and discourse that reinforced racism and misogyny within the Japanese avant-garde. Together, the history of collective listening and the racialized and gendered tensions each shape the narrative about the self-fashioning of a transnational Japanese avant-garde.

## Listening to Records in Twentieth-Century Japan

By the 1960s, listening to recorded sound as a group in specialized cafés and other public spaces was already a decades-old practice in Japan. As E. Taylor Atkins, Hosokawa Shūhei, Michael Molasky, David Novak, and others have noted, collective practices of listening to records developed in tandem with the reception of jazz and popular music from abroad over the course of the twentieth century.[11] From the late nineteenth century and continuing well into the twentieth, listening to records together in shared spaces was a primary way for Japanese enthusiasts of Western music, or *yōgaku*, to listen for knowledge about a range of styles from nineteenth-century symphonic repertoire to twentieth-century popular music. The first *meikyoku kissa* that played recordings of European *meikyoku* ("greatest hits" of European classical music) to clients was established as early as the 1880s.[12] The first Japanese *jazu kissa* (jazz café) is said to have opened in 1929.[13] Despite the inclusion of *kissa* in their names, the central purpose of *meikyoku* and *jazu kissa* was the audition of records (as a larger group, they are sometimes called *rekōdo kissa*, or record cafés). The jazz cafés played a lasting role in the access to jazz in urban Japan well into the 1960s and beyond. These spaces attracted fans, connoisseurs, and collectors as well as amateur and emerging professional musicians eager to listen to the records that lined the walls of the smoky shrines of recorded music. Managers, often owners called "masters," reigned over the cafés, enforcing rules meant to enhance focused listening. In the 1950s and 1960s the *jazu kissa* thus functioned as what Eckhardt Derschmidt has described as underground "schools" and "temples" of contemporary modern jazz that cultivated a cultural practice of listening and learning.[14] In addition to individual visitors, groups of dedicated amateur jazz listeners and collectors gathered regularly at these clubs to listen and learn together. One group that wielded significant power beyond the borders of the café walls was the Hot Club of Japan. While founded on the premise of a music appreciation group in the late 1940s, the Hot Club of Japan in many ways also functioned as a space that cultivated a generation of Japanese jazz and entertainment industry leaders. Notable members turned industry professionals included the music critics Yui Shoichi, Isono Teruo, and Aikura Hisato. The Hot Club of Japan also produced executives of recording companies including Nihon Phonogram, RVC Corporation, and King Records.[15] Collective listening through the Hot Club of Japan thus not only sharpened the ears of its members but also shaped the structures of power that would in turn forge a generation of discourse and media representation in Japan rooted in a fellowship of collective listening.

In the postwar era, US-sponsored community spaces additionally served as important sites of *listening for* new American sounds through collective listening and learning about jazz and new music by contemporary American composers. Among these was the American Cultural Center (often referred to as the American Center). The American Center was part of a network of libraries installed across Japan by the Civil

Information and Educational Section (CIE) during the Allied Occupation of Japan. These centers were part of a broad US diplomatic campaign during the immediate postwar years to build social, political, and cultural alignment between Japan and US American values of democracy and capitalism during the Cold War years. The American Center became a beloved hangout for members of the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde including Yuasa Joji, Takemitsu Toru, and many others who attended record listening sessions that featured American music.[16] Visitors to the American Center also had access to music journals and scores of new music by American composers—materials that were not available through the local Japanese libraries.[17]

Outside of the cities, listening for the sounds of jazz and American popular music on the radio was also an activity that often happened in collective settings. In a time when not every household owned a radio, families and friends would gather to listen to a single radio in the neighborhood. Perhaps they gathered to listen to important news. Or, perhaps they would tune in to the music played on the Far East Network radio established by the US Department of War, the Voice of America network, or the "Rhythm Hour" on NHK radio hosted by leading Japanese jazz critics such as Yui and Kubota Jiro.[18]

The SAC continued these practices of collective listening, study, and discussion, which were major features of the jazz-centered events. In the words of Nara Yoshihiko, former SAC administrator, "It was modern jazz that brought poets, artists, designers, photographers together to create an open-space environment (*hiroba-teki na kankyō*) in the early days of the SAC."[19] They understood that for Japanese artists, jazz offered an avenue for myriad possibilities beginning in the 1950s—or innovation, experimentation, artistic freedom, and a feeling of international contemporaneity.

The first jazz series to launch at the SAC, called the Etosetora to Jazu no Kai series (Etcetera and Jazz Circle), was part listening party, part concert, and part lecture on the theory and practices of jazz in the past and present. At the Etosetora gathering in January 1960, the attendees listened together to recordings by Thelonious Monk. Following the listening session, the program lists a discussion and debate about Monk's music by jazz critic Uekusa Jin'ichi and pianist Yagi Masao, an ardent advocate of Monk's music. (A few months later, Yagi would release his first record, *Masao Yagi Plays Thelonious Monk* [King Records, 1960]. As the title already suggests, the album was a study of Monk's music. By American standards, the playing in Yagi's record might be said to go against the tenets of originality and individual voice in American jazz. Indeed, in the words of a prominent American scholar, Yagi's playing was "fairly derivative" of Monk while the sidemen equally relied on imitation, "copying licks verbatim from popular American jazz musicians.")[20]

However, to judge originality in and around Etosetora on the merits of individual performances alone misses the point. At the core of Etosetora's experimental endeavors is the way in which the music of Monk and others was placed in conversation with other contemporary visual and performing arts. As the "etcetera" in the name of the series suggests, the series explicitly aimed to put jazz in conversation with other art forms. The Monk study session was followed by a segment titled "Experiments in Etcetera and Jazz," featuring work by the poet Tanikawa Shuntaro and others. The program from the February 1960 gathering of Etosetora similarly encapsulates a sense of experimental mixture. The flyer lists a performance titled *Eiga* + *Shi* + *Modan Jazu* (Film + Poetry + Modern Jazz), combining visual projection by photographer Imai Hisae, poetry by Terayama Shuji, and a composition by jazz musician Miho Keitaro performed by the ensemble CJA. The second presentation of the evening lists Italian artist Bruno Munari's *Direct Projections* (a series of works in which sequences of images are projected using a slide projector) combined with an electroacoustic piece by Takemitsu titled *Quiet Design*. The flyer notes artist Takiguchi Shuzo (poet, critic, artist, and impresario of the experimental collective, Jikken Kōbō, active in the 1950s), who made the Munari projections possible, would give a brief lecture on Munari. Finally, the program concluded with a lecture on "Top Ten Jazz" by Uekusa.

In addition to the jazz events, contemporary film shaped the relations between jazz and the avant-garde for the SAC crowd. From the earliest days of the Japanese film industry, jazz was part of film. Just as in the United States with *The Jazz Singer* (1927, dir. Alan Crosland), the soundtrack of the first Japanese sound film *Madamu to Nyōbō* (*The Neighbor's Wife and Mine*, 1931, dir. Gosho Heinosuke) was filled with the sounds of jazz and prominently featured a jazz singer as a character. Louis Malle's *Elevator to the Gallows* (1958), featuring music by Miles Davis, was an important vehicle for jazz at the SAC and was notable for bringing the realms of jazz and French avant-garde film together. In Aikura Hisato's assessment, for the SAC, the aesthetic value of jazz was consecrated through its validation in the film tradition of France—the original land of the avant-garde.[21] According to Aikura, inspired by the new avant-garde legitimacy accorded to jazz, SAC's director Teshigahara Hiroshi was emboldened to situate jazz at the core of the multidisciplinary gatherings.

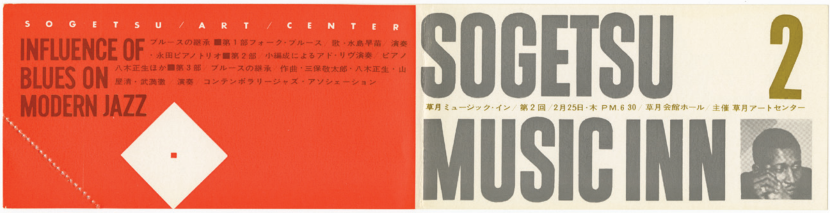
Together, the long history of the collective practices of *listening for* reveals the indebtedness of the collaborative experiments that took place at the SAC to practices around jazz and listening. Jazz was the launching point for discussions such as "the images of poetry," reflections "centered on improvisation on the piano," and "synthesizing effects for film and animation" that took place alongside musical performances.[22] While the jazz events reveal a clear attunement between the members of the Japanese avant-garde and the international scene, the centering of collective listening departs substantially from the focus on individual genius in the hegemonic Euro-American avant-garde. Yet, at the same time that the centering of these listening-centered practices of the SAC avant-garde may be understood as a radical and bold departure from the assumptions of the hegemonic avant-garde, it too depended on its structuring its own modes of inclusion and exclusion. The lens of conditional listening reveals the workings of selective processes of fetishization and erasure along racialized and gendered lines.

## Archival Absences and Conditional Listening: The Unnamed Black Man, The Little Girl, and the Missing Women

Such processes of fetishization and erasure, forms of what I describe as *listening against,* can be seen in the absences and incomplete presences in the archive of printed matter of the SAC. In one instance, there is the face of a Black man recurring in concert tickets for the Sogestu Music Inn series between 1960 and 1961. He appears in three-quarter profile. He leans his head on his loosely cupped hands, eyes looking downwards into the distance away from the camera. The image appears prominently in the SAC's publicity material for the Music Inn series as a signifier of "jazz." But what is his name? What is his relation to the events? Is he a musician? An artist? His anonymity fuels the aural imaginary, affirming the central significance of Black men as an image and fetishized objects to be regarded and admired from a distance. In the face of such absences and omissions, in this section, I focus primarily on three figures, Silas Mosley, Idemitsu Mako, and Toshiko Akiyoshi, whose racialized and gendered presences each mark the limits of what I am calling conditional listening of the 1960s Japanese avant-garde. As studied and dedicated as the practices of collective listening may have been, as a social practice, the acts of collective listening also served to determine the kinds of voices and sounds that could register as legitimate authorities as well as collectively establish those who were outside of that purview.

The jazz events at the SAC frequently focused on the recorded music of Black US Americans, featuring male instrumentalists such as the Modern Jazz Quartet, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, and Ornette Coleman along with vocalists, which included women such as Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. Yet, in person, Black American artists were largely absent from the SAC stage. Their bodies remained in the realm of the aural imaginary.

Silas Mosley, a speaker at the February 1960 meeting of the Sogestu Music Inn, was an exception. He was a Black US American educator, historian, and singer living in Japan. At the International Christian University where he worked, he was the first Black instructor in the university's history.[23] Titled "Burūsu no Keishō" (Transmission of the blues), the February Music Inn gathering featured Mosley alongside Japanese musicians, singer Mizuta Sanae and pianist Nagata Kiyotsugu. The musicians Yagi Masao, Miho



SOGETSU / ART / CENTER

INFLUENCE OF BLUES ON MODERN JAZZ

ブルースの継承 ■第１部フォーク・ブルース／歌・水島早苗／演奏
・永田ピアノトリオ■第２部／小編成によるアド・リヴ演奏／ピアノ
八木正生ほか■第３部／ブルースの継承／作曲・三保敬太郎・八木正生・山
屋清・武満徹／演奏／コンテンポラリージャズ・アソシェーション

SOGETSU 2

草月ミュージック・イン／第２回／2月25日・木 PM.6 30／草月会館ホール／主催 草月アートセンター

MUSIC INN

Figure 1: Event ticket for Sogetsu Music Inn 2: "Burūsu no keishō" (Transmission of the blues), February 25, 1960. KUAC SAC no. 038(d). Courtesy of Keio University Art Center.

Keitaro, Yamaya Kiyoshi, and Takemitsu Toru also took part in the program. In an archival audio recording from the event, Mosley can be heard introducing the audience members to the history of the blues and African American spirituals. In the lecture, in Japanese, he describes field hollers, work songs, and spirituals as the "ancestors" of jazz while locating the blues as the "backbone" of jazz.[24] Mosley also shares his assessment of the cultural and spiritual function of jazz: "Jazz is not a rhythm, nor a melody, nor even a musical form that gradually develops . . ." Instead, he insists, "It is a feeling of freedom that expresses what is felt in the moment."[25]

As valuable as Mosley's lecture may have been, his singular presence at the SAC as an American speaking about jazz leads me to question why, at the same time Teshigahara and the SAC's event organizers recognized the jazz events as a meeting point for artists across disciplines, there is little evidence of the administration actively pushing to bring any jazz musicians of international stature to the SAC. Instead, the organizers turned their attention to more local scenes. For example, jazz pianist Yagi Masao, who curated the "Burūsu no Keishō" event, spent his nights performing in the late 1950s at a Yokohama nightclub for Black US servicemen while he sought a taste of US jazz culture. It was there that Yagi claims to have experienced firsthand the "everyday sensibilities of Black people . . . and regardless of skill, the music leaped out of their mouths—the blues."[26] If the SAC could mobilize its resources and connections through individuals such as Ichiyanagi Toshi, Mayuzumi Toshiro, and Yoko Ono with ties to American artists of the Euro-American experimental lineage to bring John Cage and David Tudor to Japan, why did the SAC never seriously attempt to bring someone like Bud Powell to Japan leveraging Akiyoshi's connections? It appears that, in contrast to the all-out effort to bring white composers of the Euro-American experimental scene to Japan, the SAC largely listened against the Black body, which remained in the spaces of the aural imaginary of recordings, images, and discourse. Musicians and artists associated with the SAC's *gendai ongaku* avant-garde traveled to Europe and the United States to study the latest developments of the international avant-garde, but investment in jazz was contingent on lower budgets and domestic accessibility. Moreover, the framing of Yagi's account suggests he was able to fulfill a desire for exposure to authentic jazz by interacting with Black US servicemen, where the racialized encounter sufficiently counted as authenticity. The musicians and listeners at the club remain unnamed in his story. In another instance, an article by Otsubo Naoyuki in the *SAC* journal invokes the authority of "a Black man I know" to legitimize Otsubo's assessment of Art Farmer's album *Brass Shout* as an indicator of the future of jazz. Without ever naming the "man I know," Otsubo rests authority on the man's race over any other qualifications.[27]

Another set of absences haunt the record of three Japanese women who participated in the Sogetsu Music Inn 11 held on January 25, 1961. Titled "Etosetora no Jamu Sesshon: Gonin no Gesuto ni Yoru WHO PRESENTS WHAT" (Jam session etcetera: WHO PRESENTS WHAT by five guests), the program featured guests representing a range of fields: composer Takemitsu Toru, ethnomusicologist Koizumi Fumio, visual artist Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, and jazz connoisseur Idemitsu Mako. The jazz vocalist Goto Yoshiko performed as well, though her name was not included on the poster for the event. Also missing from both the poster and the program is jazz pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi. Akiyoshi would make an appearance later in the evening as a special guest. In the archival audio recording of the event, the difference in the ways in which authority is variously performed, or undermined, is striking. Here, I focus on the differences between Koizumi as the respected male professor, Idemitsu as a young woman who had the then still-rare experience of having witnessed the jazz scene in New York City as a Japanese national, and Akiyoshi as the brilliant jazz pianist whose sidelined position at the event seems mismatched with her status. Over the course of the evening, claims to authority and contestations of authority take shape through gendered and racialized terms.

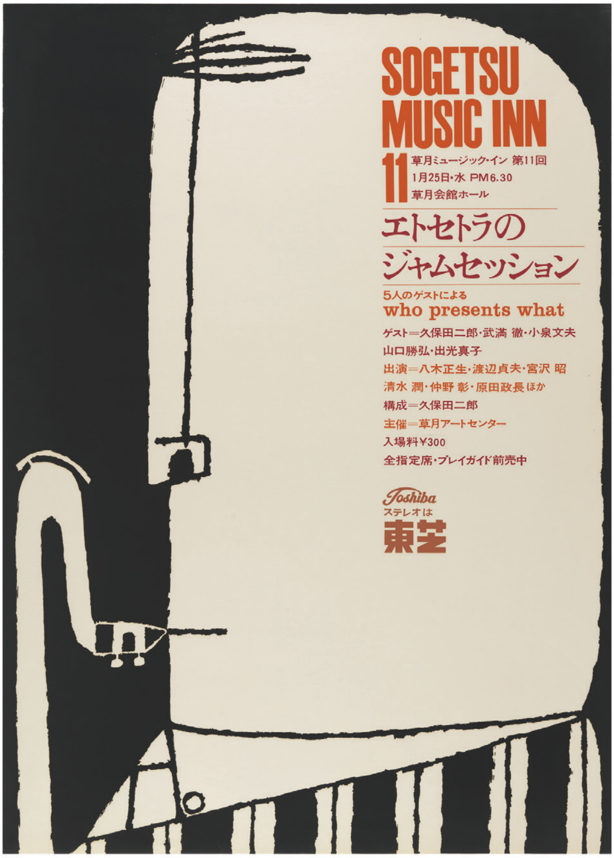

SOGETSU
MUSIC INN
11
草月ミュージック・イン 第11回
1月25日・水 PM6.30
草月会館ホール
エトセトラの
ジャムセッション
5人のゲストによる
who presents what
ゲスト＝久保田二郎・武満 徹・小泉文夫
山口勝弘・出光真子
出演＝八木正生・渡辺貞夫・宮沢 昭
清水 潤・仲野 彰・原田政長ほか
構成＝久保田二郎
主催＝草月アートセンター
入場料¥300
全指定席・プレイガイド前売中
Toshiba
ステレオは
東芝

Figure 2: Poster for Sogetsu Music Inn 11 "Etosetora no jamu sesshon--5-nin no gesuto ni yoru WHO PRESENTS WHAT" (Etcetera jam session--Who Presents What with 5 guests), January 25, 1961. KUAC SAC no. 077(c). Courtesy of Keio University Art Center.

The program of the "Etosetora no Jamu Sesshon" opens with Kubota Jiro serving as the host. In the audio recording of the event, he introduces the program, explaining that the evening is about bringing together four guests from different fields (ethnomusicology, contemporary classical music, visual art, and jazz) and combining their expertise through jazz. He recalls the excitement surrounding Art Blakey and his band's first visit to Tokyo (which had taken place just eleven days prior) and then invites the audience to listen to a performance of Miles Davis's "Dig" performed by Maeda Norio and his trio. Next, Koizumi Fumio, a professor of comparative musicology at the Tokyo University of the Arts, takes the stage for a brief lecture. He riffs on the connections between jazz and Indian classical music. In the recording, Koizumi, a male professor, speaks with the easy voice of a beloved and charismatic teacher addressing a public audience. As he expounds on the complex use of modes in Indian classical music, he plays recordings to illustrate his points. Koizumi makes it a point to distinguish the Indian music of the Brahmin class and its "big contrast to jazz," implying that jazz belongs in a social and cultural realm at the opposite of the Brahmin elite.[28] Exaggerating to emphasize the deeply systematic complexity of the Indian raga system, he explains, "There are about 37,000 modes unlike in Western classical music."[29] This draws laughter from the audience. He continues, "In school, you learn about fifty. To be a musician you need to know about two hundred."[30] He then goes on to explain the process of improvisation using the modes. After Koizumi's lecture, Kubota invites a group of musicians led by Maeda Norio to attempt a performance of Milt Jackson's "Bags' Groove" while improvising on a selection of three modes inspired by Indian ragas. Cued by Koizumi, Maeda cautiously plays three scales. The audience laughs again, perhaps noting the musicians' trepidation. The band obliges with Koizumi's request, nonetheless. Tentative but dutiful in their effort, their performance ends up sounding like a hurried application of church modes from Western classical music imposed on the melody of "Bags' Groove." But the mood of Koizumi's segment is one of convivial fraternity, with the feeling of an open rehearsal, a classroom, and a workshop where attendees encounter new perspectives from experts while the focus remains on collective listening and learning.

Following a debrief on the band's performance, Kubota announces, "A woman will now appear on stage" (*josei ga tōjō shimasu*)![31] On the printed program, this segment is titled *Watashi no Horace Silver* (My Horace Silver). The "woman" is Idemitsu, but in Kubota's introduction, her status as a woman precedes her name, reducing Idemitsu to a generic identity. Only when Kubota directly engages Idemitsu in conversation do we hear her name: "Idemitsu-san, good evening." In the exchange that follows, Kubota introduces Idemitsu to the audience. She is a college student attending Waseda University. In Kubota's words, she went to New York "because she is a jazz fan."[32] His first question to Idemitsu is about her favorite New York jazz club and musician. Now cast in the role of the young *josei*, she performs her part, a sweet young woman. Her favorite club? "Well, I suppose Birdland of course" (*yappari* Birdland), she replies, elongating the last syllable of *yappari-ii,* taking on a Japanese speech pattern associated with girlishness. Favorite musicians? She giggles shyly and names Horace Silver (*yappari* Horace Silver).

The conversation then turns to the topic of Silver's racial authenticity. Kubota asks Idemitsu, "Horace Silver is not a real Black man, right? He's fake? But he is spearheading the 'funky' [sound in jazz]."[33] Idemitsu responds that Silver is "about half Black," with a Portuguese mother. Her defense of Silver is that "he keeps the rhythm with his whole body . . . and sweats so much that if you sit close to him the sweat might fly off to you" as if his sense of rhythm and profuse sweating were the sure signs of his bodily connection to the music.[34] Idemitsu's validation of Silver echoes a racialized white American view of Black musical labor, where visible physical exertion is viewed as evidence of value and authenticity, a critique that Anthony Braxton made about white critics reifying Blackness with the phrase "the reality of the sweating brow."[35] Jokingly, Kubota turns to Maeda and suggests that the next prompt is for him to play like Silver, that is, sweating profusely to prove his worth as a jazz player (a joke conflating Blackness, jazz, and biology, where authenticity might be measured in ounces of sweat). At the same time, both his introduction and his questions to Idemitsu enact a *listening against* the possibility of Idemitsu sharing deeper insight about her experiences in America. Kubota directs the conversation to produce a performance of Idemitsu as a sweet rich girl, starstruck by Silver. As the segment's title implies, her testimony of "My Horace Silver" is nothing more than her personal opinion than a studied account. The takeaway for the audience is that her feminized presence marks her as a novelty act. For the host, the most useful part of her segment seems to have been to affirm entrenched notions of the biological racialization of authentic jazz through the interrogation of Silver's Blackness.

In the years that followed, Idemitsu would in fact become known as one of Japan's foremost experimental media artists and a fierce feminist voice of the Japanese artistic avant-garde. Her works, with titles such as *What a Woman Made* (1972) and *Kae, Act Like a Girl!* (1996), reveal her tongue-in-cheek brand of feminism. If her film and video works are evidence of fearless creativity and critical insight, the gap between this better-known Idemitsu and the infantilized *josei* on stage denied a chance to speak as an authority is all the more striking. It is impossible to discern from the archived audio recording what the listeners in the audience were actually thinking. Could they have imagined and listened beyond the façade of gendered performance? Could there have been a space to listen past the codes of conditional listening that foreclosed a more open-ended engagement with Idemitsu's account? Could they hear Idemitsu as a messenger and authority who, behind all the performances of the girlish fan was in fact a young artist who had traveled abroad and gained rare access to the spaces of the New York jazz and art scenes, where most of her Japanese compatriots could only imagine through their listening?

Later in the program, Kubota excitedly announces a special guest. It is Toshiko Akiyoshi. Judging from the sense of anticipation in Kubota's banter, he had eagerly awaited the arrival of Akiyoshi. She had just returned to Japan from the United States the night before for the first time in five years since departing to study at the Berklee School of Music. The occasion was for a Japan tour of the Toshiko Mariano Quartet.[36] On stage, Akiyoshi explains that she wanted to get to the Sogetsu Hall earlier but couldn't. Greeted as a celebrity upon her return, she had attended a big homecoming party held in her honor that afternoon at the Akasaka Prince Hotel.[37] As they converse, Kubota tries to persuade Akiyoshi to play for the audience. But the request seems to take her by surprise. Her response sounds evasive. "Well, I'm playing [in Tokyo] in March, so . . ." Kubota again pleads, referring to her as "Aki-chan," addressing her in a friendly and diminutive way of addressing women and girls: "Well something in secret? Aki-chan, come on."[38] She agrees but mutters, "If you had told me, I would have told him [Charlie Mariano, the sax player] to bring his instrument. Then, turning to her bassist, she asks, in English, "Gene [Cherico], do you want to try the bass?" (Presumably, as with the piano, there is an instrument on stage that Cherico can use for this occasion.) She explains to Kubota, "We don't usually play without the sax. . . . So I don't want people to misunderstand our sound . . . we're just going to play one piece."[39] Kubota reminds the audience that this is an unauthorized performance. They play around eight minutes of hard bop jazz. This is, in fact, the first (though unofficial) public performance in Japan by her American group, which included Mariano, Cherico, and Eddie Marshall. In sharp contrast to the tenuous tone of her conversation, her performance is unquestionably commanding. But the archival recording does not contain anything else from Akiyoshi. There is no other sign indicating that she returned to the discussion after her performance.

Akiyoshi's authority as an established musician should have been unquestionable on the SAC stage in 1961. Her credentials were impressive by any measure: At age twenty-four, in 1954, she had already released her own album in the United States and Japan, produced by jazz impresario Norman Granz. She was also the first Japanese musician to attend the Berklee School of Music where she received a full scholarship.[40] But her one performance at the SAC is all but erased from the visual and textual archive. With Akiyoshi's participation uncertain until the moment she stepped onto the SAC stage, there is no official program that bears her name. The SAC's archive of printed matter misses her presence altogether. Her name and sound exist only in the archival recording. But if Akiyoshi was Japan's leading jazz musician at this point in 1961, why was her participation so poorly planned and so tenuous?

For some listeners assembled at the SAC, even her performance was suspect. Her performance should have served as a demonstration of the latest techniques and sounds, delivering a rare experience of hearing a sound cultivated on the stages of New York City directly to the listeners assembled at the SAC. Whereas the critic Yui Shoichi widely championed Akiyoshi's talent in his writing and radio shows, others such as Aikura Hisato remained ambivalent about her success. In his book on the history of Japanese jazz, Aikura actively *listens against* Akiyoshi's talent and discipline, instead ascribing her success to the spectacle of being an "Oriental" and "woman" in America.[41] Aikura was suspicious of the fanfare she was receiving both in Japan and the US on the grounds that Akiyoshi's reception was contingent on her gendered exoticization as *tōyōjin* (an "Oriental" person) and *josei* (woman).[42] No amount of international recognition was enough to enable Aikura to hear Akiyoshi without regarding her gendered and racialized Japanese female body as the object of suspicion. Unable to see beyond the Orientalist frame, he could not comprehend how Akiyoshi's career might have depended on proving to herself and listeners that she was more than a novelty act or "publicity" stunt. This was true whether she was performing for Norman Granz, at Berklee, or for the Sogetsu crowd. Aikura thus deploys his authority as an expert listener and writer to police the boundaries of who counts as a legitimate voice of jazz. Aikura's resistance to Akiyoshi is especially pronounced, as the critic was deeply invested in the promotion of Japanese jazz.

It is possible to read Aikura's aversion to Akiyoshi in his own discomfort and shame in seeing Japan's finest jazz musician objectified as a sweet, kimono-clad "Oriental" girl. On the album cover of Akiyoshi's first US release in 1954, titled *Toshiko's Piano*, there is an illustration by the artist David Stone Martin of a woman, presumably Akiyoshi.[43] She wears a modernized Chinese qipao-style dress. The Chinese dress seems to reference both a generic Orientalism and perhaps also Akiyoshi's birthplace in fascist Japan-controlled Manchuria in Northeast China as a justification. Using lettering from the "Chop Suey" font family, an American typographic signal used to evoke the stereotyped "Orient," the name "TOSHIKO" in all caps appears on the cover. Semianonymous, she isn't given her full name. Just Toshiko and her piano. The woman is depicted from behind, standing next to a grand piano where she has placed both hands as she gazes off into the distance. A large floral arrangement explodes above the piano. The floor-length dress casts the woman in the image as a lady in a salon. Far from such scenes of peaceful domesticity, in reality, it was not long before, prior to her studies at Berklee, that Akiyoshi had been cutting her teeth at dancehalls and clubs for American servicemen near the US bases in Japan. One such venue was the Seamen's Club in the port city of Yokohoma, a place that Akiyoshi recalls was a "rough place, and they maybe have a fight every night of the week but, you can play."[44]

Promoting a different image, the same album was released in Japan with the title *Amazing Akiyoshi Toshiko*, which imitatively echoes the naming of *The Amazing Bud Powell* (1954), Akiyoshi's musical role model. It's worth noting that the admiration went both ways, with Powell famously pronouncing her the best female jazz pianist—though his praise too was couched in gendered terms. But for Aikura, the image of the "Oriental girl" serves as proof of Akiyoshi's lack of musical ability. For Aikura, Akiyoshi was a great imitator of her idol and mentor Bud Powell but nothing more.[45] His attack on Akiyoshi homes in on the notion of imitation, reifying a broader anxiety in Japanese jazz about the Japanese inability to move beyond imitation into the realm of authentic and original creativity—the broad acceptance of Akiyoshi by the US jazz community notwithstanding. Akiyoshi and Idemitsu each played direct roles in bringing knowledge about jazz to the SAC. Yet, the SAC audience saw their presence filtered through racialized and gendered discourses.

In 1961 when Idemitsu and Akiyoshi appeared on the SAC stage, they had very little in common aside from a few traits: both were women with deep investments in jazz, and they both had firsthand experience being around the music in the *honba*—the privileged authentic site—of the United States, New York City. Their differences were far more pronounced: Idemitsu was a wealthy daughter of the Japanese oil magnate Idemitsu Sazo, founder of the company Idemitsu Kōsan. She had traveled to the United States as a college student, at a time when relatively few Japanese had either the leisure time or the funds to take on such a trip. An ardent jazz fan, she frequented jazz clubs in New York City, becoming familiar with key players in the scene. A few years after her Sogetsu Music Inn appearance, Idemitsu would return to New York, this time as a student at Columbia University. By contrast, in 1961, Akiyoshi had already made waves in both the American and Japanese jazz worlds. She was a rarity as a female artist who had attended the Berklee School of Music on scholarship and entered the New York scene as a fiery and dazzling hard bop pianist. And yet, despite these differences, Akiyoshi's and Idemitsu's appearances at the SAC are united by their invisibility and exclusion through the mechanisms of conditional listening, that is, *listening against* possibilities that lay beyond the boundaries defined by gendered and racialized limits. Attendees and presenters saw the appearances of both women as spectacles with their gendered identity shaping their reception, their expert knowledge and unique insight notwithstanding. The treatment of a third woman who appeared on stage on the same night at Sogetsu Music Inn II with Idemitsu and Akiyoshi—the jazz vocalist Goto Yoshiko—only further affirms both the significant presence of jazz women on the Sogetsu stage and their persistent erasure from the written record of the SAC. Goto performed in "I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)" by Duke Ellington with lyrics by Paul Francis Webster. As the composer Takemitsu introduces the band, he jokes that he doesn't trust the pianist Yagi Masao to sing but Yagi should get his wife Goto-san to do so.

Yagi's name appears on the event's flyer. Goto's does not, though she too was a well-established jazz musician at that time.

Paying attention to the gaps in the SAC archives reveals how Mosley, Akiyoshi, and Idemitsu contributed to the project of the collective listening sessions that shaped experimental practices in 1960s Japan. The assembled audience members surely recognized this to an extent. At the same time, reception and interactions during the programs framed them as novelties marked by their racialized and gendered identities and simultaneously rendered them unheard and unseen—their names and voices erased from the archive. As the SAC avant-garde strived to open their ears to multiple realms of artistic practice, their love for jazz existed as a carefully policed aural imaginary that served the avant-garde while managing anxieties about authenticity and appropriateness along the fault lines of race and gender. Freedom to explore new aesthetic possibilities glaringly did not guarantee freedom from an objectifying sociality of Japanese male listening.

## Coda: The Possibilities of Jazz—Missed Connections and Future Implications

Jazz occupied a curious place at the SAC. Jazz events shaped the spirit of the SAC, which in turn foregrounded collective exchange and internationalism in Japanese experimental practices. However, listeners of the avant-garde also excluded certain voices and sounds from their field of hearing. If listening was a democratic process with an experience shared among a collective, that collective nonetheless produced its own boundaries. At the same time, in historiographical terms, the jazz activities at the SAC yielded few singularly transformative moments since their events centered on listening and collective study of existing recordings rather than groundbreaking new works and premieres.

For jazz musicians, too, the SAC provided a space to go beyond the expected. Jazz musicians came to the SAC with an interest in infusing jazz with avant-garde techniques and sensibilities. At the Shinseiki Ongakukenkyūjo (New Century Music Research Institute) established by Takyanagi Masayuki in 1962, a group of adventurous jazz musicians began exploring the possibilities of graphic notation for jazz performance.[46] The *gendai ongaku* avant-garde figured into pianist Yagi Masao's 1965 SAC recital, "Jazz—New Thing." While referencing the free jazz album *New Thing at Newport* featuring John Coltrane and Archie Shepp in the recital's title, Yagi also incorporated a graphic score, possibly German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Zyklus* (1959), in the program for the concert, indicating his enthusiastic experiment with new ways of approaching improvisation unbound by genre.[47]

For Aikura Hisato, the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde offered the possibility of creating original forms of Japanese jazz. "Jazz changes from the outside," he argued.[48] A key interlocutor between jazz and the *gendai ongkau* avant-garde, Aikura claims to have attended all of the Etosetora events. He also went to the series of events surrounding John Cage, David Tudor, and Robert Rauschenberg's visits as well as many of the events in the Sogetsu Contemporary Series that featured new experimental works by young Japanese composers such as Ichiyanagi Toshi or Kosugi Takehisa. Aikura himself took part in a multimedia performance organized by experimental musician Tone Yasunao that occurred at the SAC. The resulting sound recording would later become the soundtrack for Kanesaka Kenji's film *Hopscotch* (1967). Convinced of the significance of such events, the critic made it his mission to school younger jazz musicians. Aikura's students included the pianist Yamashita Yosuke, and Aikura taught these new developments in avant-garde music and arts in his weekly night school gatherings held in the second floor of a *meikyoku kissa*, named Mozart, located in the back of a pawn shop in the Asagaya neighborhood of Tokyo.[49] Yamashita, for his part, would become one of the most prominent Japanese jazz pianists over the course of his career. He continued to collaborate with members of the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde over the next several decades, which would include premiering Ichiyanagi Toshi's Piano Concerto No. 4, "Jazz," written specifically for him. Graphic notation, too, made an impression on jazz musicians.

In the end, however, it became clear to both the jazz musicians and the members of SAC's ever-more *gendai ongaku*-leaning avant-garde that the "jazz" that interested SAC composers and artists was viewed from a safe distance and occupied a separate category from the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde. The exchanges between the central members of the SAC's avant-garde and jazz communities were hardly mutual. While the SAC avant-garde idealized jazz, the scores produced by the jazz musicians in the Shinseiki Ongakukenkyūjo were never taken up with any sustained interest by the avant-garde crowd. Jazz and the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde thus influenced each other in asymmetrical ways but ultimately reinforced a cultural hierarchy that benefitted the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde more than the jazz musicians at the SAC. Perhaps it is telling that the name of the series "Etcetra and Jazz Circle" put the "etcetera," or whatever was understood as not-jazz before jazz, in its title.

A memoir by the conductor Iwaki Hiroyuki speaks to the conflicted relationship of the Japanese *gendai ongaku* avant-garde with jazz.[50] Iwaki entered the Tokyo University of the Arts as a percussion student at the same time as legendary jazz drummer Shiraki Hideo. He deeply admired his classmate and followed Shiraki to his nightly gigs with the Blue Coats. Iwaki later recalled that he too was on the cusp of joining another jazz group, but he declined in the end. He felt that he could not live up to the high standards set by the "genius" of Shiraki's playing. Claiming that he had no authentic "feeling for jazz" in his body (a framing that leans on racialized discourses of embodiment in jazz), Iwaki reasons that he could not pursue jazz in the long term.[51] He notes that Shiraki died alone by suicide. He was only thirty-nine. Iwaki mentions that it took almost two weeks after his death until his body was discovered. Iwaki's account implies that Shiraki's genius is also linked to his inability and refusal to take on any other work than that of a jazz drummer. While writing with love and tenderness toward his friend, the juxtaposition of his own decades-long career as a world-renowned conductor of classical music to that of Shiraki's implies something about jazz that relegates it to a youthful passion, a fling, but something too dangerous and fickle to pursue as a lifelong pursuit.

At the SAC too, while jazz and its surrounding listening practices served the transnational Japanese *gendai ongaku* avant-garde in the years that followed, the engagement with jazz appears as something like Iwaki's notion of a fling: a passionate burst of initial energy that gradually declined after its first few years. Nara Yoshihiko, the SAC administrator, blamed the popularity of the Sogetsu Music Inn series and the subsequent pressures it received from the Japanese jazz industry from outside the SAC. In Nara's assessment, calls to embrace an industry-based model directly went against the SAC's identity as a haven from commercial pressures as a cause of the rift surrounding jazz and its effective disappearance from SAC programming. As Nara described it, "We wanted the Music Inn to stay out of the battles for prestige and acknowledgment that complicated things in the music industry so that we could stay on the same level as the audience."[52] Contemporary Japanese jazz musicians for their part eventually rejected the avant-garde of the SAC as elitist. As the split between jazz and *gendai ongaku* became clear, for the jazz critic Shimizu Toshihiko, the SAC represented the stuffy site of the "snobbish" (*sunobbu na basho*) avant-garde.[53] Even the Sogetsu Music Inn—which Aikura describes as a series initially organized by jazz musicians themselves to analyze and study jazz—was beginning to feel boorish: "I went to all of them but there was something a bit too academic and stale about reproducing the music exactly from recordings."[54]

By 1963, the Sogetsu Music Inn was over. Critical voices invested in contemporary Japanese jazz including writers such as Aikura, Soejima Teruto, and Ishihara Shintaro were increasingly invested in the political force of jazz. For these critics, the insularity of the SAC signaled a sphere of bourgeois elitism, and the talk of radical experiments was meaningless without a concrete grounding in revolutionary politics. What emerges is a rupture between what the SAC *gendai ongaku* avant-garde heard in their aural imaginaries of jazz and what jazz musicians sought from the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde. Thus, while jazz was a catalyst for collaborations creating new forms of expression, the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde and jazz scenes were far from fused. Nor did the composers inclined toward *gendai ongaku* seek to become jazz musicians. Even as the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde was attracted to ideas about freedom, improvisation, and the centrality of performance, jazz was a muse and auditory imaginary but not an equal to experimental practices of the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde.

Over the years the erasure of the story of jazz in relation to experimental practices and *gendai ongaku* has been compounded by music historical habits that continue to lean on style rather than creative processes. That is, whereas the *gendai* *ongaku* avant-garde produced around the SAC shows clear sonic and aesthetic affinities with the music of the Euro-American avant-garde, the traces of listening practices in the creative process are much harder to discern in a style-based genealogy. In this sense, jazz—especially the jazz at the SAC that centered on listening and imitation—has had little relevance in a style-based genealogy of experimental practice and *gendai ongaku*. However, if such listening practices are understood as incommensurable but also resistant to the hegemonic avant-garde because they stem from distinct histories, practices, and values, then jazz must occupy a central place in the narrative of experimental practices in 1960s Japan.

In the years following the peak of the jazz series at the SAC, programming shifted away from an explicit and visible interest in jazz, now replaced by other activities. In the mid-1960s, for example, the interests of Ichiyanagi and Takemitsu leaned into rock music. But rock, or any other emerging art form, would never play the same kind of formative role as jazz in terms of creating spaces for collective study and exchange within the space of the SAC. Significantly, the interchanges between jazz and the *gendai ongaku* avant-garde created the conditions of possibility for future Japanese experimental practices. By the mid-1960s, the SAC itself would no longer retain its place as a central gathering place for Japanese experimental practices. Yet, in spaces beyond the SAC, the collaborative habits cultivated at the jazz events as well as ongoing negotiations with the complicated entanglements of race, gender, and a transnational avant-garde would continue to shape new experimental practices.

## Acknowledgments

The author thanks Marié Abe, Olive Demar, Cathy Hannabach, Tracy McMullen, Hiromu Nagahara, and the two anonymous reviewers for *Jazz and Culture* for their generous feedback over various incarnations of this article. I am also grateful to Hitoshi Kubo, Sen Uesaki, the Keio University Art Center staff, and Isobe Masako at the Sogetsu Foundation Library for research support.

## Notes

Note on names: Japanese names appear as family name first, followed by given name except for the cases of Yoko Ono and Toshiko Akiyoshi, who are US-based artists whose professional names generally appear as given name first, followed by the family name.

1. Founded by ikebana master Teshigahara Sofu in 1927, Sogetsu was and continues to be an ikebana school, teaching traditional Japanese flower arrangement to students in branches across Japan and around the world. The Sogetsu Art Center was a small extension of Sogetsu Ikebana, operating within the Sogetsu Kaikan between 1958 and 1971. Teshigahara Hiroshi, Sofu's son, served as director of the SAC.
2. In 1960, one of the Sogetsu Contemporary Series events was dedicated to animated film. The other five were portrait concerts, each featuring the music of one of the composers of a group that called themselves the Composer's Group.

3. Kuniharu Akiyama, "Sokowa 60-nendai zen-ei geijutsu no shingenchi datta" [It was an epicenter of the 1960s Avant-Garde], in *Kagayake 60-nendai: Sogetsu Āto Sentā no zenkiroku* [Shine on 1960s: The Complete Records of the Sogetsu Art Center], ed. "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai (Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002), 46.
4. Watanabe Miho, "Nihon no modan jazu, genndai ongaku, furii jazu no setten: Sogetsu Āto Sentā to Shinseiki Ongaku Kenkyūsho no katsudō o rei ni" [The intersection of modern jazz, contemporary music and free jazz in Japan: Around Sogetsu Art Center and the Shinseiki Ongaku Kenkyūjo], *Tokyo Geijutsu Daikgaku Ongaku-Gagkubu Kiyō* 34 (2008): 189–202; Aikura Hisato, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi* [The ultimate history of Japanese jazz] (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012).
5. Important narratives that this article builds on include work by Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); George Lewis, *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Brigid Cohen, "Enigmas of the Third Space: Mingus and Varèse at Greenwich House, 1957," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 1 (April 1, 2018): 155–211; Kwami Coleman, "Free Jazz and the 'New Thing': Aesthetics, Identity, and Texture, 1960–1966," *Journal of Musicology* 38, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): 261–295.
6. David Novak, *Japanoise: Music at the Edge of Circulation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 93.
7. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 90.
8. Roshanak Kheshti, "Touching Listening: The Aural Imaginary in the World Music Culture Industry," *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011): 711–731.
9. Kheshti, "Touching Listening," 711.
10. Philip Joseph Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Culture America (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 11.
11. E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Shūhei Hosokawa, "Jazu kissa no bunkashi senzenhen: Fukusei gijutsujidai no ongaku kanshō kūkan" [A cultural history of jazz coffeehouse in prewar Japan: The music appreciation in the age of reproductive technology] *Nihon Kenkyū* 34 (2007): 209–248; Michael S. Molasky, *Jazu kissa ron: Sengo no nihonbunka o aruku* [Jazz cafés and postwar Japanese cultural history], Shohan (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2010); Novak, *Japanoise*.
12. Molasky, *Jazu kissa ron: Sengo no nihonbunka o aruku*, 33.
13. Shūhei Hosokawa, "The Swinging Phonograph in a Hot Teahouse: Sound Technology and the Emergence of the Jazz Community in Prewar Japan," in *Sound, Space and Sociality in Modern Japan*, ed. Joseph D Hankins and Carolyn S Stevens (Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 114.
14. Molasky, *Jazu kissa ron: Sengo no nihonbunka o aruku*, 198.
15. Shoichi Yui, *Jazu Shōwa shi: Jidai to ongaku no bunkashi* (A history of Showa jazz) (Tokyo: DU Books, 2013), 100–101.
16. Bonnie C. Wade, *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 63–64; Toru Takemitsu, "Contemporary Music in Japan," *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 200.
17. Even as the American Cultural Centers spread across Japan were often viewed skeptically as instruments of the American propaganda machine, the library at the American Center

in Tokyo was a haven for some composers, who made use of the abundant recordings, scores, and publications on American and international contemporary music. Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (Washington, DC; Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007); Watanabe Yasushi, *Amerikan sentā: Amerika no kokusai bunka senryaku* [American Center: America's strategic international cultural policy] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008), 32.

18. While military radio was created for US service personnel stationed in Japan, Japanese devotees were fervent listeners as well. Katherine Whatley, "Kiyoshi Koyama: A Life Lived with Jazz," *Japan Times*, March 29, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/03/29/music/kiyoshi-koyama-life-lived-jazz/.
19. Yoshihiko Nara, "60-Nendai ga teikyō shite kureta butaisōchi" [The stage apparatus that the 1960s provided], in *Kagayake 60-Nendai: Sogetsu Āto Sentā no zenkiroku* [Shine on 1960s: The complete records of the Sogetsu Art Center], ed. "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai, eds. (Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002), 237.
20. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 338.
21. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 72.
22. Sogestu Art Center, "Event Ticket for Sogetsu Music Inn 5: 'Modan jazu no tayō teki ōyō'" [The diverse applications of modern jazz], May 27, 1960, KUAC SAC no. 050(b), Keio University Art Center.
23. Sogestu Art Center, "Event Ticket for Sogetsu Music Inn 2: 'Burūsu no keishō'" [Transmission of the blues], February 25, 1960, KUAC SAC no. 038(d), Keio University Art Center; Holloway Brown, "Silas Mosley—Ambassador of Goodwill in Japan," *Negro History Bulletin* 23, no. 8 (May 1, 1960): 171; 191. Based on my research, I have identified just one other Black American musician, the singer Billy Banks, who performed at in a Sogetsu series. Banks had lived in Japan since the 1950s. He appeared on Sogetsu Music Inn 10 with Mosely on November 12 at the Nihon Toshi Center Hall. Based on the success of the Sogetsu Music Inn 2 program that featured Mosley, this event took place off-site as a touring version of the program based on the February 1960 Sogestu Music Inn.
24. Silas Mosley, "Burūsu to jazu no tsunagari" [The connection between jazz and blues], *SAC* 8 (November 1960).
25. Sogestu Art Center, "'Burūsu no keishō' [Transmission of the blues] Sogetsu Music Inn 2," archival recording, February 25, 1960, recording no. 182.
26. Yagi Masao, "Burūsu no keishō" [Influence of blues on modern jazz], brochure, Sogetsu Art Center, February 25, 1960, KUAC SAC 38a.
27. Naoyuki Ohira, "Kore kara no jazu" [Jazz from now on], *Sogetsu Art Center*, April 1960.
28. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon' [Etcetera jam session] Sogetsu Music Inn 11," archival recording, January 25, 1961.
29. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
30. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
31. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
32. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
33. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
34. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"

35. Anthony Braxton, *Tri-Axium Writings* (Lebanon, NH: Frog Peak Music, 1985), 297–298.
36. Akiyoshi was known as Toshiko Mariano at this point in 1961, when she was married to the saxophonist Charlie Mariano who was also a member of the group.
37. Zen'on Gakufu Shuppansha, *Kogun: Akiyoshi Toshiko sono jinsei to sakuhin* [Kogun: Akiyoshi Toshiko, life and works] (Tokyo: Zen'on Gakufu Shuppansha, 2004), 78.
38. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
39. Sogestu Art Center, "'Etosetora no jamu sesshon.'"
40. However, wryly, in interviews she has suggested that the invitation to attend Berklee was a "publicity" ploy for the school noting her exoticness as an Asian woman who played jazz. Toshiko Akiyoshi, "Toshiko Akiyoshi, 2007 September 29," interview by Fred Bouchard, Berklee Oral History Project, September 29, 2007. https://archives.berklee.edu/bca-011/toshiko-akiyoshi-2007-september-29/2007–09–29.
41. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 63.
42. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 63.
43. Martin, an American artist, was best known for his work on jazz album covers including Bud Powell, Oscar Peterson, Mary Lou Williams, and many others.
44. Akiyoshi, "Toshiko Akiyoshi, 2007 September 29."
45. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 74. Aikura was hardly alone in his racialized and gendered denigration of Akiyoshi. Michael Molasky notes the existence of a similar line of argument where an anonymous writer belittles Akiyoshi's studiousness as suspect and impossible while bizarrely comparing her performance on the keyboard to that of a "mixed race child" to imply that Akiyoshi had somehow betrayed both Japanese womanhood and racial purity. Michael S. Molasky, *Sengo nihon no jazu bunka: Eiga, bungaku, angura* [Jazz culture in postwar Japan: Film, literature, and underground] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2005), 43–49.
46. Watanabe Miho, "Nihon no modan jazu," 196.
47. "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai, *Kagayake 60-nendai: Sogetsu Āto Sentā no zenkiroku* [Shine on 1960s: The complete records of the Sogetsu Art Center] (Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002), 267.
48. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 64.
49. Molasky, *Jazu kissa ron: Sengo no nihonbunka o aruku*, 85–86.
50. Hiroyuki Iwaki, "Watashi no rirekisho 27," *Nikkei Shinbun*, October 28, 2003.
51. Iwaki, "Watashi no rirekisho 27."
52. Akiyama, "Sokowa 60-nendai zen-ei geijutsu no shingenchi datta," 48.
53. Watanabe Miho, "Nihon no modan jazu," 199.
54. Aikura, *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi*, 78.

## Works Cited

Aikura, Hisato. *Shikō no nihon jazu zenshi* [The ultimate history of Japanese jazz]. Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2012.

Akiyama, Kuniharu. "Sokowa 60-nendai zen-ei geijutsu no shingenchi datta" [It was an epicenter of the 1960s avant-garde]. In *Kagayake 60-nendai: Sogetsu āto sentā no zenkiroku* [Shine on 1960s: The complete records of the Sogetsu Art Center], edited by "Sogetsu Āto Sent*ā* no

Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai, 34–66. Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002.

Akiyoshi, Toshiko. "Toshiko Akiyoshi, 2007 September 29." Interview by Fred Bouchard. Berklee Oral History Project, September 29, 2007. https://archives.berklee.edu/bca-011/toshiko-akiyoshi-2007-september-29/2007-09-29.

Atkins, E. Taylor. *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001.

Braxton, Anthony. *Tri-Axium Writings*. Lebanon, NH: Frog Peak Music, 1985.

Brown, Holloway. "Silas Mosley—Ambassador of Goodwill in Japan." *Negro History Bulletin* 23, no. 8 (May 1, 1960): 171, 191.

Cohen, Brigid. "Enigmas of the Third Space: Mingus and Varèse at Greenwich House, 1957." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 1 (April 1, 2018): 155–211. http://jams.ucpress.edu/lookup/doi/10.1525/jams.2018.71.1.155.

Coleman, Kwami. "Free Jazz and the 'New Thing': Aesthetics, Identity, and Texture, 1960–1966." *Journal of Musicology* 38, no. 3 (July 1, 2021): 261–295.

Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Culture America. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004.

Hosokawa, Shūhei. "Jazu kissa no bunkashi senzenhen: Fukusei gijutsujidai no ongaku kanshō kūkan" [A cultural history of jazz coffeehouse in prewar Japan: The music appreciation in the age of reproductive technology] *Nihon Kenkyū* 34 (2007): 209–248.

———. "The Swinging Phonograph in a Hot Teahouse: Sound Technology and the Emergence of the Jazz Community in Prewar Japan." In *Sound, Space and Sociality in Modern Japan*, edited by Joseph D. Hankins and Carolyn S. Stevens. Hoboken, NJ: Taylor and Francis, 2013. http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=1576005.

Iwaki, Hiroyuki. "Watashi no rirekisho 27." *Nikkei Shinbun*, October 28, 2003.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*. New York: Free Press, 2009.

Kheshti, Roshanak. "Touching Listening: The Aural Imaginary in the World Music Culture Industry." *American Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (2011): 711–731.

Lewis, George. *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Masao, Yagi. "Burūsu no keishō" [Influence of blues on modern jazz]. Sogetsu Art Center, February 25, 1960. KUAC SAC 38a. Brochure.

Matsuda, Takeshi. *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Molasky, Michael S. *Jazu kissa ron: Sengo no nihonbunka o aruku* [Jazu kissa and postwar Japanese cultural history]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2010.

———. *Sengo nihon no jazu bunka: Eiga, bungaku, angura* [Jazz culture in postwar Japan: Film, literature, and underground]. Tokyo: Seidosha, 2005.

Mosley, Silas. "Burūsu to jazu no tsunagari" [The connection between jazz and blues]. *SAC* 8 (November 1960).

Moten, Fred. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

Nara, Yoshihiko. "60-nendai ga teikyō shite kureta butaisōchi" [The stage apparatus that the 1960s provided]. In *Kagayake 60-Nendai: Sogetsu Āto Sentā No Zenkiroku* [Shine on

1960s: The complete records of the Sogetsu Art Center], edited by "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai, eds., 237–240. Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002.

Novak, David. *Japanoise: Music at the Edge of Circulation*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2013.

Ohira, Naoyuki. "Kore kara no jazu [Jazz from now on]." *SAC* 2, April 1960.

Piekut, Benjamin. *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Sogestu Art Center. "'Burūsu no keishō' [Transmission of the blues] Sogetsu Music Inn 2," February 25, 1960. recording no. 182. Archival recording.

———. "'Etosetora No Jamu Sesshon' [Etcetera jam session] Sogetsu Music Inn 11," January 25, 1961. Archival recording.

———. "Event Ticket for Sogetsu Music Inn 2: 'Burūsu no keishō'" [Transmission of the blues], February 25, 1960. KUAC SAC no. 038(d). Keio University Art Center.

———. "Event Ticket for Sogetsu Music Inn 5: 'Modan jazu no tayō teki ōyō'" [The diverse applications of modern jazz], May 27, 1960. KUAC SAC no. 050(b). Keio University Art Center.

"Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai. *Kagayake 60-nendai: Sogetsu Āto Sentā no zenkiroku* [Shine on 1960s: The complete records of the Sogetsu Art Center]. Tokyo: "Sogetsu Āto Sentā no Kiroku" Kankō Iinkai: Film Art, 2002.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Takemitsu, Toru. "Contemporary Music in Japan." *Perspectives of New Music* 27, no. 2 (1989): 198–204. https://doi.org/10.2307/833410.

Wade, Bonnie C. *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Watanabe, Miho. "Nihon no modan jazu, genndai ongaku, furii jazu no setten: Sogetsu Āto Sentā to Shinseiki Ongaku Kenkyūjo no katsudō o rei ni" [The intersection of modern jazz, contemporary music and free jazz in Japan: Around Sogetsu Art Center and the Shinseiki Ongaku Kenkyūsho]. *Tokyo Geijutsu Daikgaku Ongaku-Gagkubu Kiyō* 34 (2008): 189–202.

Watanabe, Yasushi. *Amerikan sentā: Amerika no kokusai bunka senryaku* [American Center: America's strategic international cultural policy]. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008.

Whatley, Katherine. "Kiyoshi Koyama: A Life Lived with Jazz." *Japan Times*, March 29, 2018. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2018/03/29/music/kiyoshi-koyama-life-lived-jazz/.

Yui, Shoichi. *Jazu shōwa shi: Jidai to ongaku no bunkashi* [A history of Showa jazz]. Tokyo: DU Books, 2013.

Zen'on Gakufu Shuppansha. *Kogun: Akiyoshi Toshiko sono jinsei to sakuhin* [Kogun: Akiyoshi Toshiko, life and works]. Tokyo: Zen'on Gakufu Shuppansha, 2004.

# "A Meditation Among Drums": A Black Archive of Wandering at the *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency* Exhibit

*Kehinde Alonge*

## *Abstract*

*This article follows my firsthand encounter with the Ars Nova Workshop and Artist Space's collaborative exhibit,* Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency, *to fully engage with the question of how one might construct, or perhaps, more appropriately, deconstruct, an archive away from its typical neoliberal function to allow the propagation of "Black wandering" (explicitly thinking with and through Sarah Cervenak's use of the term "wandering"), whereby unrelenting subjectivity and disjunctive practices in temporality persist. As I navigated the visual and aural rubbings produced by the trove of Graves's life's ephemera, audio recordings, interviews with Marvin X, and heart monitor research, it remains clear that both his life and his music's experiential qualities, steeped in disorientation and dispersal, exceed the hold of the mediums that contain them, as they still exude a capacity in their arranged juxtapositions to produce what Baraka calls free jazz's "new thing." Therefore, this article contends Graves's archive maintains a space by which, even in his passing, his sound and being can "reemerge as a new thing," thus offering him futurity not predicated upon a corrected closure in the gap between the past and present but rather one forged by the disjunctive synthesis of moments that encourages those wandering amid its sonorous space to improvise their listening practices alongside Graves's unceasing improvisation, in indeterminate directions.*

In August 2020, the world of jazz received news that Milford Graves, one of Black music's most prolific and polymathic drummers, had taken a turn for the worse in his

**Jazz & Culture** Volume 7, Number 1 Spring/Summer 2024
© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

battle with amyloid cardiomyopathy (stiff heart syndrome). Many had known that Graves had been experiencing physical ailments, as his live performances dwindled in number after receiving his diagnosis in 2018. However, when the news dropped that his condition had worsened—in the midst of a global pandemic that had already taken so many lives, especially in the jazz world (Giuseppe Logan, Henry Grimes, Sonny Simmons, Jemeel Moondoc, McCoy Tyner, Burton Greene, Lloyd McNeil, and too many others)—many faced the grim possibility of a musical world without Graves's presence.

Shortly after August's news, the Ars Nova Workshop, an organization dedicated to presenting improvised music in Philadelphia, convened a series of Zoom sessions surrounding Graves's work and held conversations with Graves and his contemporaries, both past and present. Although dealing with the challenges posed by his deteriorating health, Graves still carried the spark of his percussive life as he bounced from stories about his early days playing in Latin bands, his musical contributions, theatrical works produced by Amiri Baraka's Black Arts Repertory Theatre, his scientific discoveries relating to the human heart and its improvised pulsating beat, and, finally, the invention of his martial arts technique called Yara that, as the name translates from Yoruba, combines the nimbleness of West African dance with the movements of a praying mantis. An interesting question that arose from the session dealt with how Graves thought about the future of his music. A participant had asked him plainly how he planned to pass down the insights of his music to future generations of musicians. Graves paused, smiled, and simply retorted with his own question and answer: "How do you teach your children? They have to participate with you." Although deceptively straightforward, this response stuck with me, as it cut through the detritus that often lingers when trying to understand this undefinable music. Participation—whether done consciously or unconsciously—brings together disparate ideas and people across timelines and geographies. It encourages others to engage and prolong whatever medium they find themselves engaged with, whether they have the vocabulary to understand the medium or not. As Graves framed it, "The more words we use, the more we get screwed up. Just participate." It was clear to anyone listening that Graves embodied the sociality demanded by the free jazz music he played—a fluid comportment willing to waver beyond the societal strictures set by fixed disciplines. As he once profoundly framed his art as a twenty-three-year-old when interviewed for the *National Observer*, "I don't want to define what I'm doing. I prefer to do something, learn from what I'm doing, and then go on from there. I want to undefine. This is discovery."[1] In his undefined life, Milford Graves and his musical collaborators created a heterogeneous totality or, to borrow from Kevin Quashie's *Black Aliveness*, "a commonwealth untroubled by the need to speak to or for [itself]."[2] Doing so would only reify the rigidity of a world and negate the nimbleness required for improvisation and Black life.

The Zoom sessions held by Ars Nova provided a groundwork for the expansion of a Milford Graves retrospective exhibit already running at the Institute of

Contemporary Art (ICA) Philadelphia called *Milford Graves: A Mind-Body Deal*, which contained a wealth of Graves's ephemera, paintings, cardiologic equipment, and musical recordings. Ken Micallef of *Jazz Times*, in a glowing review, remarked on how the vast diversity of the archival collection provided a much-needed "inside track [into Milford Graves], like an aural history passed among devotees."[3] Following the exhibit at the ICA, the organizers sought to greatly expand the exhibit and take it to New York—the city where Graves got his start. The exhibit would be called *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency*, organized and curated as a collaboration between Mark Christman from Ars Nova and Danielle A. Jackson from the New York-based organization Artists Space. In this larger iteration, the organizers had plans to have Graves come to the exhibit and speak (in place of playing) on his life experiences while musicians and dancers, both young and old, whose art had either crossed paths with or was indebted to Graves, could perform. However, just as this exhibit stood in its embryonic stage, on February 12, 2021, the jazz world received news that it could anticipate but could never indeed be ready to hear: Milford Graves had passed away. A vacuum filled the world of Black music as its ensemble lost yet another piece of its percussive heartbeat. With its practitioners dying, left and right, one could only sit in the mire of loss and its haunting questions: How will this Black music stay alive beyond the constraints of life itself? What is its noncorporeal (Black) future?

Amid this surge of death, predominantly Black death, one could not help but anxiously wonder if this music's predilection for undefinition left it vulnerable to the indifferent hands of time. What precisely do the undefined subjects of free jazz leave behind for the tradition to carry onward? What is free jazz's archive? Might the question itself appear heretical to a music bent on epistemological and temporal disruptions that spill over the containment of objects that call for mourning—therefore, a fixation that hinders imagination? How might one remember and imagine with the departed? This last question, in particular, remains a constant with Black life as Black death serves as a fulcrum to the anti-Black world we inhabit. As such, one always must discover ways to maneuver through memory and homage without "replicating the grammar of violence" these departed Black subjects faced in life.[4] Moreover, in the case of free jazz, this violence manifested in concerted capitalistic efforts to "force its myriad and diverse styles to conform to a single [identifiable] pattern," suitable for commodification.[5]

With so many obstacles set in place of both the life and afterlife of Blackness, one could only wonder how both the Ars Nova Workshop and Artists Space would curate a space conducive to both honor the life of Graves and keep his music alive without compromising its dissonant and "crooked" sonic comportment. Such compromises run quite rampant in archival spaces today as many, according to Marika Cifor and Jamie A. Lee, "universaliz[e] and eras[e] differences" in ways that often forsake the unorthodox depositions taken by the artists themselves.[6] Moreover, the archive often becomes primed to flatten the totality of an artist in favor of putting forth a product that appeals to cost-efficiency, orderliness, and the profitable metrics imposed by a capitalistic logic of private institutional spaces. In such an instance, one might place a primacy of Graves's music over his other endeavors or keep them in separate rooms in an archive to compartmentalize his life into rigid spheres rather than syncretic movements. In such a configuration, one can only maintain futurity via inertness: one's art becomes that singular concretized pattern, suitable for collection and possession, and thus unable to bring about anything new. This configuration of futurity "embodies tacit [temporal] hierarchies" wherein the past can have no impact on the present or future that therefore poses an immediate threat toward the poly-temporal emphasis exuded in free jazz that grants even the past a freedom to, as Baraka states, constantly "reemerge as a new thing."[7] To do otherwise is to enact a dismemberment of the art itself—a violent practice reminiscent of Western Enlightenment's justifications for the possession and dismemberment of Black bodies. Furthermore, as noted by Sara Cervenak, these acts of "reckless dismembering" can only "foreground a transcendent white subject as author" of the Black artist's totality while "consolidating [Blackness's] status as objects to be written."[8] Put plainly, Blackness's futurity and survival take a back seat to the white subject's aggrandizement and survival of the white subject vis-à-vis the institutional space itself as a universal arbiter of both ontology and time itself. As Adrienne Edwards articulates in her article "Blackness in Abstraction," when dealing with the materiality of Blackness's many arts, one must grant its multiplicity whereby one's curation of it exhibits "what it does in [and to] the world without conflating it . . . with a singular historical narrative or monolithic subjectivity."[9]

For said reasons, the "new thing," to return to Baraka, in free jazz must stand in complete contradistinction from notions of collection or possession, as no one is meant to possess it in a particular state that forestalls its only constants: permutation and imminent dispersal. Even the musicians themselves sometimes purported not to own their music. The free jazz trumpeter Don Cherry, a contemporary of Graves, once stated, "It's actually not my music because it's a combination of different experiences, different cultures, and different composers that involves the music we play together, or that I'm playing when I'm playing alone."[10] The collectivity of undiluted Blackness—a weaving of disparate and diasporic selves—constitutes the open totality of free jazz music; past forms of Blackness trespass beyond the grip of time to join in on the ensembles of their foreclosed tomorrows. Only in this configuration—attuned to the wanderings and trespasses of Blackness—can this music stay alive. Any archive that purports to sustain that aliveness must first and foremost, as Fumi Okiji frames it, relinquish "the irresistible attraction of self-preservationist control" over Black music—one can only speak as a part of the music and never as an arbiter of music.[11] Thus lies the question that joins the forever-gathering ensemble of questions asked prior: Is such a feat possible for an archive? Might the, albeit good, intentions of the Ars Nova and Artists Space exhibit stand in the way of the living and changing textures imbued onto a music that allows Black subjects to reappear and disappear at the indeterminate will of an "undefined" sound?

Although this is a complex array of questions to pose toward any institutional space, especially after the sudden death of a musician it wished to celebrate, it appeared as though both Ars Nova and the Artists Space had long grown accustomed to dwelling in the contemplative space that these questions—and Black music—require. In fact, it's worth noting that despite the persistent hegemonic and colonial practices that often occur in museums and galleries, many Black artists, historians, and curators have still participated in theorizing and engaging what it might mean to honor Blackness's dynamic materiality in these spaces. As exemplified by Bridget Cooks's book *Exhibiting Blackness*, these interventions into the world of the archive made by Black curators and artists date back to the late 1920s[12] and have sought to rectify these imbalances with a two-fold approach: "the anthropological approach, which displays the difference of racial Blackness from the elevated White 'norm,' and the corrective narrative, which aims to present the work of significant and overlooked African American artists to a mainstream audience."[13] Akin to these historical traditions of rethinking the archival and curational practices of Black art, both Ars Nova and the Artists Space share a deep history with free jazz and experimental visual art and primarily derive their programming and structure from the music and art itself. Both organizations have long served as a mediating force in their respective localities, Philadelphia since the early 2000s and in New York since the early 1970s, to allocate improvising artists a space for the full expression their artwork demands. These organizations, like the musicians and artists they have served, wandered throughout their cities, frequently without a place to call home, creating openings and developing monetary funds that could meet, as the Artists Space website maintains, "the shifting needs and concerns of artists and [their disparate] audiences."[14] In a world largely hostile to music not so readily accessible and conducive to capital accumulation, both organizations serve the music rather than having the music serve them.

This, of course, is not to present these organizations as utopic forces unburdened by the constraints of capital. Rather, it suggests that their organizers carry with them a care-work that emphasizes speaking as part of the music rather than for it. Such a caring ethos could be seen immediately after the passing of Graves as both organizations consulted with his family in Jamaica, Queens, to deliberate on how they may best curate the forthcoming retrospective. With the opening day set for October 2021, both organizations took their time to reach out for support from the sprawling community of artists, loved ones, and audiences who had the luxury to encounter Graves and his work in its varying modalities. Both organizations put out a public call for anyone who might have Milford Graves ephemera depicting his multifarious and itinerant artistic approach. Moreover, unlike institutional spaces that often claim artists' belongings (sometimes without consent or with just the sheer determining force that capital affords) for permanent display, both organizations do not purport to possess the art that appears in their exhibits and consistently return items after use. As Jay Sanders, the current director of Artists Space, remarked in a 2019 interview with ARTnews:

> Artists Space is not a commercial gallery, so you're not as readily looking at art like it's a commodity. And because it's not a museum, you're looking less in terms of institutional affiliation and collections and the kind of elevation that figures in a museum. I feel like it's an important, in some ways more neutral, space. I think it's much-needed to engage with viewing and producing and consuming art for its intellectual and ontological characteristics, in a time when people are nihilistic about that in an art world that is so much about money and ownership and claiming things and manipulating them for gain.[15]

These exhibit spaces also simultaneously serve as performance spaces where the musicians can perform in dialogue with the visual materials being presented, creating multimodal presentations for disparate audiences who happen to enter the exhibit space. In Sanders's words: "Our audience tends to be people with a real investment in art, so there's a kind of committedness and tenacity. It's a really active audience that often becomes participants, so that sense of it as a practitioner's space feels really key."[16] In this configuration, the music and musicians presented by their exhibits earn their futurity not solely through their presence as a fixed and heralded object but through the continued practice and performance of their respective art—whether performed by the artist or by other artists operating within the same continuum. "This music—jazz and improvised music—it's not a one-size-fits-all model," states Mark Christman, the director of Ars Nova. "Even if we are not trying to create environments that are site-specific, we are trying to elevate the work and present it in the most meaningful context."[17]

Nevertheless, one could only wait until opening day to see if the many proclamations made by both organizations would hold true. I had to see it for myself. I had to see it for Graves. I had to see it for Black music. In my mind, the opening day could not come any sooner.

## Opening Day: *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency*

On October 8, a relatively cool Friday evening, I hopped on a bus and train from New Jersey to 11 Cortlandt Alley in New York City to attend the opening of the Milford Graves retrospective. After attending many of the Zoom sessions run by Ars Nova, I was more than intrigued to see how this space might serve to commemorate Graves's life. I had long reflected on what death meant and its corrosive effects on a music tradition that seemed to be losing more practitioners and participants daily. All of these thoughts, both pleasant and depressive, stayed with me as I approached the doors of the new exhibit. Would Graves's absence be felt? Could his life-filled joviality be heard and made tangible beyond the inertness of still objects in a gallery? Might the space make room for participation? It seemed that such answers awaited me even before I opened the doors, as I could hear a mixture of ambient chatter alongside the sound of Graves playing his colorful drum kit, as though he had reawakened to make a sonic appearance at his own retrospective.

When I entered the gallery, I soon discovered that the sounds emanated from a looped video recording of a 1973 concert in which Graves performed alongside Hugh Glover and Joe Rigby on saxophone and Art Williams on trumpet. Although the film played on a small cathode-ray television in the far-right corner of the gallery space, its noise filled the room without concern for its place. I could see Graves performing his characteristic chants and his technique of pushing his elbow on the trap drum all the way from the opposite side of the gallery. The remainder of this opening space mainly contained his cardiological models and experiments. Figuring out where to begin perusing felt like deciding where to stand at a concert to get a chance to hear the performers the best. It was a task marked by futility, so I decided to make my way over to his experiments with cardiology.

Graves had begun exploring the heart as a biological percussive instrument in the 1970s and used his findings to detect if the pulsations of one’s heart signaled trouble. He discovered that the heart improvises with our daily environment and that a heart that fails to improvise with its environment potentially signals a dangerous clotting issue. In this configuration, improvisation as a comportment, particularly within Black life, does not merely exist as a matter of aural predilection but instead primarily as a demand for ontological subjectivity and survival in a rigid world; to cease improvising becomes akin to death itself—from the rhythms of the drum to the beats of the heart’s pulsations.[18] Graves’s heart findings, or heart music as he and others called it, affirmed Black sociality. They showed that our “constant improvisational contact,” to quote Fred Moten, constitutes “a dispossessive intimacy of rubbing, whose mystic rehearsal is against the rules.”[19] A Black sociality whose percussive disobedience could sustain and offer Blackness a life beyond mere fantasies of flight within the hold of anti-Blackness.[20]

Deep in rumination while hovering over electrocardiogram printouts that read as graphic musical scores of the heart, I began to experience an infiltration of sounds from the same television at the opposite end of the room. At this point in the 1973 concert, Graves ceases playing on his trap drums and begins to mutter “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven [pause], one, two, three, four, five, six, and seven,” in ranging tempos that oscillate with a series of harmonic beeps emanating from the heart monitor equipment. An aural rubbing had commenced, paradigmatic of Graves’s call for musicians to listen to the body and heart and for cardiologists to listen to music—a music of survival. However, in the same air filled with these aural rubbings, for me, hung the grimness that the music could not save Graves, who had died from irregularities of his own heart. Nevertheless, perhaps the new swell of colliding sounds produced an improvisatory jazz ensemble that proved otherwise—that even beyond the hold of death, Graves still finds a way to make the "new thing" happen. When facing the possibility of death via heart failure, Graves did not falter in his belief in improvisation's ability to sustain life or a future. He leaned toward it more: "It turns out, I was studying the heart to prepare for treating myself . . . . It's like some higher power saying, 'OK, buddy, you wanted to study this, here you go.' . . . Now the challenge is inside of me."[21] Although these innovations did not spare his Black life, I took solace that they could sustain another Black life. Graves's music demands improvisation, both external and inward. So I heeded its council and looked inward, beyond the hold of grief and loss.

After some time, I began to make my way past a series of Graves's paintings and art sculptures, gradually approaching the epicenter of the sound generated by the television. In this side of the room, I found myself, once again, utterly saturated in an orchestra of aural and visual stimuli. Videos played of Graves demonstrating his martial arts technique (Yara) to his students in Queens, paired with footage of Graves in his garden harvesting herbs, all the while the intensity of noise from the television rose in amplitude. There were no boundaries in this gallery—only a stirring of feelings in interplay. The sensation mirrored the vibrant colors that decorate Graves's self-designed album covers hanging on the gallery's wall, coating the room with a newness not found solely in each object's containment. It felt reminiscent of a call for the unification of Black art that Graves once made in the 1969 anthology *Black Arts: Anthology of Black Creations*:

> The unity will clearly motivate and direct black people towards total liberation. WE are now seeing black painters combine colors with a soul-black rhythm that causes the body to vibrate. . . . The new black art. A powerful black art. Black People! Black people! Beware. We are here. We are coming. Open your ears and eyes. A new revolutionary black united art is here to stay![22]

Adjacent to this newfound sensorium, I spotted a series of glass panels containing a collection of interviews, vinyl sleeves, flyers, and much more. These materials document Graves's itinerant artistic life that included Jamaica, Queens; FESTAC-Nigeria; Japan; and worldwide. Although deceivingly offering a stillness from the haptic qualities of the noise permeating the room, the materials also came with an invitation for haptic relations, as each glass panel came with a pair of headphones that played an assortment of recordings ranging from Graves's early days with the New York Art Quintet to his collaborations with free-improv guitarist Derek Bailey and the Japanese dancer Min Tanaka.

What partially drew me to this side of the exhibit was a search for two items I had contributed myself: a 1974 *Coda* interview and an Amiri Baraka play titled *Experimental Death Unit #1* that listed him as a drummer. I sent these to Mark Christman after the Ars Nova Workshop issued an open call for any rare Milford Graves materials.[23] Along with interviews and flyers, many folks contributed items for the gallery—even tailor-made clothing Graves had worn on his first trip to Japan. Through the guidance of the organizers and Graves's extended family, several cooperative hands from all spheres of Graves's life found a space to gather and make the exhibit come to fruition—a "gathering-work" made possible by Graves's music. Gathering-work, as Okiji states, refers to acts in which each participant willingly offers their body as a "makeshift vector/host, a point of contact for [its] elusive, plastic gathering/dispersal."[24] Even as a visitor in the exhibit, one felt the invitation to join in this "gathering-work" as both a practitioner and a transducer—reorienting its shape and organization of time with the slightest sensorial engagement. This ensemble of transductive points of contact called to mind Tina Campt's proposition of what she calls the hidden "grammar of the archive," wherein these series of haptic happenings create within themselves a reservoir of "alternative modalities" unfixed and suited for the discovery of unvisited archival temporalities.[25] Each object in the gallery contained within it "a performance of a future that has not yet happened but must." All it takes are wandering fingers, ears, and eyes coming together into one haptic ensemble to generate "new things."[26]

## A Detour into Noise: A Black Arts Dialogue Between Graves and Marvin X

Within a few moments, I found not only the interviews I had recommended but also, to my surprise, the original playbill for *Experimental Death Unit #1*. To add to my excitement, next to these appeared a 1969 interview with Graves and the Black Arts Movement poet, playwright, and essayist Marvin X for the *Journal of Black Poetry*. The interview offered a deep insight into how Graves's music, and more broadly the music of free jazz, brushes up against the regulative and predatory antiwandering forces of capitalism via the music industry.

To provide some historical context, the interview was conducted during Graves's sixth year as a professional jazz musician. Much had taken place in the preceding years, impacting the political and social realities of the music's Black practitioners. In 1967, jazz lost its most extraordinary voice with the sudden passing of John Coltrane, who, in many ways, served a pivotal role in providing basic needs (recording opportunities or even housing) to many of his younger successors in free jazz. In the same decade, the Black community at large found themselves also wrangling with the United States' sanctioned murders of many of their tireless freedom fighters, including Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and, around the time of the interview, Fred Hampton. The list goes on and on. As the haunting realities of death loomed over many in the Black community, the fervor for self-determination and resistance also ensued, especially within free jazz. Repeatedly pathologized by critics as "sick," "pain-ridden," and "neurotic musicians" playing and "manufacturing [their] own mausoleum[s]," free jazz musicians were no strangers to the alienation and epistemic violence caused by America.[27] The music's discordant melodies and embrace of noise virtually ensured that its players would be offered few gigs at local jazz clubs, which preferred its musicians to merely serve as ambient jukeboxes conducive for its drinking patrons. As one of Cecil Taylor's early sidemen, Buell Neidlinger recounted regarding the isolation that came with the music:

> Trying to make a living playing with Cecil is absolutely unbelievable because there is no economic advantage to playing music like that. It's completely unsalable in the nightclubs because of the fact that each composition lasts, or could last, an hour and half. . . . They want to sell drinks. But when Cecil's playing, people are likely to tell the waiter to shut up and be still.[28]

Beyond the pains of isolation, musicians also had to beware of physical violence. Some clubs went as far as to stalk musicians on their way home from gigs, as Sunny Murray once discussed in a 1970s interview with Robert Levin. Others went as far as bribing musicians like Ornette Coleman to "not play for a whole year."[29] Condemned to social, economic, and physical death for the audacity to openly wander beyond the tempered scales imposed by Western music theory, many of free jazz's Black practitioners took it upon themselves to take the logic of their music's predilection for nonenclosable tones and apply it to the material worlds they inhabited. And for Graves, that material world was none other than New York City.

From the beginning, the interview with Marvin X bypasses the cordialities of introductions and artist self-promotion. Instead, Graves immediately describes how the music industry entices and entraps Black musicians into regulated spheres and modes of sociality. As Graves points out, "When these brothers got downtown, the man sectioned them out, you see and being surrounded by the slickest of slickers, you know, white intellectuals and white critics, you see, they have a way of isolating you or making you isolate yourself in the black community . . . and this is what killed them."[30] Just as Western Enlightenment sustained itself through centuries of physical mutilation of Black bodies, Graves, too, paints an image of how the capitalistic music industry engages in the dismemberment of Black sonic bodies. Furthermore, unbeknownst to the musicians who eagerly traveled downtown to make a "living," Graves bluntly asserts that they could only hope to find their own death, as their refinement could only serve to aggrandize the ever-present "I"—the white universal subject of the recording industry at the expense of themselves. The jazz musician exists as nothing more than a superfluous commodity of exchange for the sake of deregulated (also read as wanderlust) modes of exploitation and primitive capital accumulation. In order to sustain the lawless procurements made by this exploitative arrangement, the musician must undercut their "Black creativeness"—the source of Blackness's affectable comportment—to establish a legible and exploitable channel of communication with white intellectuals.

While the supremacy of the record industry over Black musicians seemed all too immutable, Graves still insisted that a call for resistance was not out of reach for Black musicians caught in its hold, a hold that goes as far back as the slave ships carrying Africans across the middle passage. Graves contends that the foundation of the music establishment's hold—just like the hold of the Enlightenment—sits on a ground that Black music can unsettle with a cymbal strike. He emphatically declares:

> The white man knows that we are a powerhouse when it comes to music—or any of the artistic fields—we are a powerhouse, you know what I mean, and like he knows that if that music got out, that we would challenge and smash white culture. You see, and that's where he's stuck. We'd be smashing the whole theory of Western music that's centuries—hundreds and hundreds of years old. We'd be smashing it because people would readily take to us.[31]

The critical ingredient to Black music's capability to unsettle the whole theory of Western music lies in what Graves calls "the noise element," an unregulated ocean of sound ready to throw linearity into crisis. Just as Immanuel Kant and other philosophers of the Enlightenment feared oceanic indeterminate modes of being that could "produce a crisis" for their makeshift islands of reason, Graves suggests that the music industry feared the indeterminacy of the noise element in Black music for the simple fact that it resists the enclosures of a marketable tempered scale and, therefore, complicates the industry's ability to transgress upon the Black musician.[32] As Jacques Attali frames noise in his book, appropriately titled *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, "Noise is violence: it disturbs. To make noise is to interrupt a transmission, to disconnect, to kill. It is a simulacrum of murder."[33] Consequently, it becomes quite clear why the commercial music industry anxiously sought to sublimate noise's potency.

According to Graves, free jazz's embrace of noise gives Black musicians a position of power because just as reason cannot first occur without wandering, the same holds for music and noise; thus, the music industry inherently sits upon an element it seeks to conceal. The privileged ground of Western music exists as nothing more than a crooked straightness awaiting its unsettlement by the dissonance of free jazz practitioners who excel in the oceanic. Free jazz is music unafraid of the oceanic. The music and the Black bodies form a deregulated and continuous emotional unsettlement of the mind's need to deduct the transcendental elements of space and time. Basking in noise's discordant textures, free jazz "retreats into ineffability," and forges a home out of it—a home that both Okiji and Moten call "a place named No-Such-Place."[34] In this No-Such-Place, both theorists propound that Blackness bears its para-ontological status, which constitutes a "structural position of noncommunicability in the face of all other positions," marked by Western ontology. This indexically undefined position, which Graves exemplifies in his music, leaves an open totality by which Blackness can roam both undetected and "independent of capital" and free from its sublimating structures forged by insipid repetition.[35] Graves depicts both the impenetrable and nontranslatable power of this position in an anecdote he gives of critics' frustration and anxiety regarding the release of his 1965 album *Percussion Ensemble*, whose title tracks all begin with the word "nothing":

> Brother Sonny Morgan and myself did a side out by the two of us, and the devil, just wouldn't believe it was done by two people without electronic instruments—they don't believe it. They want to say I overdubbed on it. They say: "Come man, you overdubbed," and they [were] trying to compare it with the European drummer, a French percussionist over there, who uses like a whole classical orchestra of percussionists, and it sounds like—man, it sounds like one cat—that's all it sounds like.[36]

In the space of "nothing," Graves refutes the task of solely keeping time—a tool for music's sublimation—in favor of the unrelenting noise emanating from polyrhythms located on the skins of drums and the body. These approaches are culminated by Graves's drumming style, which he gave the Yoruba name Bäbi. In line with the undetectability attributed to nothing, Bäbi, according to Graves, calls on the improviser to channel the internal and unheard frequencies of their body (ranging from one's respiratory to the circulatory system) and transpose them onto the drums as both a means to produce a more organic sound and to enact a "therapeutic methodology" to acquaint one with the body's needs better. In this configuration, organs and drums become intertwined haptic rubbing sites by which noise unsettles any rigidities imposed upon the Black body, potentially healing it from the ills of capitalism at the same time.

Although noncommunitive and ineffable to the commercial world of music, the music still speaks a language and invites a dialogue with those who show a willingness to enter its void. Such is evident in many of Graves's collaborations with other percussionists in the movement—most notably Andrew Cyrille on their 1974 album *Dialogue of the Drums*. To sustain these collaborations, Graves created his own collective, Self-Reliance Productions (SRP), which sought to produce free jazz albums, curate spaces, and put on concerts for the Black community not merely to consume but also inhabit the music both bodily and consciously. Forged as a collective rather than an individualistic money-making hustle, Graves felt that this orientation might better allow Black musicians to not only sustain a living while performing this unmarketable music but also embolden the vibrancy of the Black community's unity within the music:

> See, the new black musicians are more attuned with each other, we're more communicative with each other. It's much more talk and a little bit more sincere with each other. You know, we know each other; not just the cat who's coming in who we have never seen. . . . See, that's abstract music that has no sort of positive relationship with people. You know, it's still telling people to follow the same laws that have been out as slave laws. . . . What we do believe—just the money now—is that the money left over is to be used in a way that would benefit all of us.[37]

For Graves, free jazz’s ensemblic sociality serves as more than just a site for the collision of sounds. Rather, it also depicts a sociality by which Blackness can thrive and wander in the harmony and melodies imbued within the fabric of Black feeling—the expressive energy that Baraka terms the “changing same” that pervades all Black aesthetic performance.[38] Graves traces this inclination toward unity back to jazz’s origins in New Orleans: “The New Orleans period was a time when there was better communication, and so more people knew about each other.”[39] However, Graves states that this sense of community was stifled by the antiwandering musical education imposed upon Black musicians who sought to make a living from their music outside their communities. This capitalist urge was only fit to produce what Attali calls “mass music,” which he characterizes as signaling the “death of the family” with its repetitiveness in a form that loses any cultural heterogeneity.[40]

Despite the dangers of erasure and further social death, few musicians of all levels of prestige could fight the temptations to sequester their creativity in the face of the false promises of futurity offered by the capitalistic music industry. Even Charlie Parker, who Graves discusses somberly throughout the interview, took that path. Graves maintains that this path brought Parker to the end of his life: “Bird wanted to play Black natural music, but Bird said: Man, I’ve got to do this—because he had to make money to support his habit. You see, people don’t know this. Some things Bird did, he probably wouldn’t even—he didn’t even accept himself.”[41] Besides his addiction to narcotics, Graves suggests that Parker had already died as soon as he positioned communicating with the white intelligentsia and white consumers of jazz over himself and the Black community. According to Graves, Parker was interested in exploring the wide range of sounds in atonal music—the music industry’s nemesis, the “noise element”—but curtailed a full embrace of it for the sake of marketability and accessibility. This, of course, is not to suggest that Parker’s innovative bebop stylings did not inhabit some degree of “noise” or that Graves did not place the recordings of Parker on a high plateau. Instead, it probes one to ask alongside Graves: “If Bird was given the opportunity or the surroundings to make that creative thing that he really had come out,” we might find out “what Charlie Parker was really trying to tell us.”[42]

In an attempt to prevent that tragic musical pilgrimage of Parker from repeating itself among the next generation, John Coltrane, Graves argues, sought to cultivate spaces safe for Black creatives to engage, wander, and probe the depths of their music and Blackness. Carter Mathes’s 2015 book, *Imagine the Sound*, offers insights into the plans Coltrane and his contemporaries had in regard to aiding Black music’s self-determination and preservation:

> Coltrane and Olatunji joined with multi-instrumentalist and composer Yusef Lateef in order to create an informal organization dedicated to furthering the economic and creative self-determination of black music . . . “an anthology of

> our music, starting in Africa, the Americas, its development. Both Lateef and Billy Taylor explain that Coltrane's connection with Olatunji reflected a shared concern with creating new spaces for black art, essentially an atmospheric ethics of space connected to black expression. As Lateef recalls, Coltrane was in search of a new type of performance space, "without whiskey, without alcohol . . . so children could come and hear the music."[43]

While the invocation of the word "anthology" might lead one to posit that the project eerily reified a conception of space and time as enclosed and restrictive elements (thus exclusionary and hegemonic), this illustration does not quite fit the description. Coltrane and company seemed more invested in Black performance as an anthology in itself. In other words, the anthology of Black music and art would be more of an experiential interaction than an object one could physically possess. Music becomes the activation site of an ephemeral archive via an ensemblic sonic performativity of Blackness itself. That is to say that one's participation in the living anthology of Black music furthers its presence in the present and the unknown future. Anthology exists not as a monument to view from a distance but rather as a space for children and elder to inhabit and actively hear and participate.

However, tragically before such an endeavor could come to fruition, Coltrane suddenly passed away, and at the same time, so did the promise of a space suited for Black sonic wandering. "He was going to do something that none of them brothers were doing," Graves remorsefully states in the interview, but "death really stopped him from telling black people where he was really at."[44] It is precisely the impasse created by the Black death that fuels Graves's insight and propels his performance of Black sociality through the drums. Determined to carry the tradition forward, Graves places himself and his community at the epicenter of loss and seeks to grow the "noise" of his people; the call of revolution, or, as he calls it in the interview, the human feelings of Black music.

Rather than remain in the mass music of grief, Graves took it upon himself to play the human feeling continuum of Black music at John Coltrane's funeral in an iconic performance of the song "Love Cry" alongside Albert Ayler.[45] As Kevin Laskey notes in his article "Signifyin(g) with the Dead: Musical Memorialization at John Coltrane's Funeral," between Ayler, Graves, and Ornette Coleman's performances, the church evoked the feeling of a revival rather than a burial. Graves's rumblings on his trap drums and Ayler's and Coleman's screeching wails reverberated the walls of the Lutheran church, raising a joyful noise in living dialogue with Coltrane's playing. Put plainly by Laskey:

> As a mode of mourning, the virtual signifyin(g) in the performances acts as a new, modern form of *prosopopeia*, a rhetorical device in which someone speaks as someone else—as if the deceased person were communicating from beyond the grave. However, instead of pretending to speak *as* Coltrane, they perform as

> if speaking *with* him. . . . Instead of reducing him to a repeatable, imitable riff, they preserve Coltrane's spirit, a living legacy that continues to comment on new, creative music.[46]

At that moment, their music did more to sustain futurity for fallen figures like Coltrane and Parker than any ambitions for a physical site of remembrance could have. Their music becomes emblematic of Black time and its affordance of, to quote Tavia Nyong'o, a "queer hack" of an anti-Black world that allows for the memory of both Coltrane and Parker to reappear in temporalities otherwise foreclosed to them.[47] Their respective spirits live on in this music, despite its form or whether it is performed consciously or unconsciously with preservation in mind. The music carries on a noise element that can only come from Blackness's will to, as Baraka frames it, "remerge in a new thing" and, perhaps most importantly, to love and "be Loved"—a boundless Black Love Supreme.[48]

## Conclusion: Exhibit Turned Jazz Funeral Turned Revival

It was only after ruminating over the Marvin X interview for what felt like an endless duration (but was actually only about five or ten minutes) that I began to realize that the time hacks found in Graves's music could also be found in the "new things" emerging from the series of haptic and wandering relations in the exhibit. Rather than serve as inert objects held in a stasis of grief, each item enacts a performance of a fractal memory of Graves that presents itself differently depending on where one stands or wanders. As I approached the exhibit's exit, I spotted Graves's signature drum kit, with its distinct painted shells and hollowed-out kick drum. Before my entrance into the exhibit, the noise seeping beyond the containment of the gallery sounded like Graves had attended his own retrospective to perform a new solo. Simply put, this Graves exhibit is not a holding nor a ground that provides Graves traction to remain on Earth. Instead, it is a space for the ensemblic rehearsal of recollections, sounds, and memories that have yet to occur.

A few weeks had passed since my initial visit to the exhibit, and I was lucky to receive an invitation to the memorial for Graves that would be held in the same space. Upon arriving at the memorial, one could find individuals from all walks of life and demographic groups. Young and old; American and Japanese; musician and dancer; family and fan. The memorial, like Coltrane's almost fifty-six years prior, was not driven by a fixation to preserve or recreate the totality of Graves's essence but instead functioned as a tribute that mirrored Graves's own drumming at Coltrane's funeral. Each of the attendees enacted a series of fabulative performances (musically, visually, bodily, and orally) that imbued Graves's aesthetic energy onto the space—even if it was for only a brief moment. The walls of the space echoed with the reverberations of the memorial's final performance in which an ensemble of drummers who had played with and under Graves rattled away complex polyrhythms while those who studied Graves's Yara technique encircled us in the audience. As this percussive ensemble ensued for perhaps twenty minutes, an archival video of Graves performing Yara hung in the background, as if he, beyond the grave, beckoned us all to participate in a jazz memorial turned revival—a revival only found in the undefined "No-Such-Place" of Black music. At that moment, we all spoke Black music's dialogue—not found in a single person or musical score or the detritus of inert words—but one of drums and a will to be loved. The moment clarified that as long as we willingly participated in the dialogue of the drums, the heart of Graves and Black music would continue to conjure "new things" for us all to inhabit. "Just participate. . . . Just participate," Graves says—from where all jazz musicians go after they have grown tired of our time. Onward and forever!

## Notes

1. Robert Ostermann, "They Don't Call It Jazz: The Moody Men Who Play the New Music," *National Observer*, June 7, 1965.
2. Kevin Everod Quashie, *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being*, Black Outdoors (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021), 12.
3. Ken Micallef, "Heart Specialist: Philadelphia Exhibit Honors the Many Accomplishments of Milford Graves," *JazzTimes*, November 20, 2020, https://jazztimes.com/features/profiles/heart-specialist-exhibit-honors-many-accomplishments-milford-graves/.
4. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 5.
5. Frank Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 159.
6. Marika Cifor and Jamie A. Lee, "Towards an Archival Critique: Opening Possibilities for Addressing Neoliberalism in the Archival Field," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017): 12.
7. Amiri Baraka, *Black Music* (New York: W. Morrow, 1967), 200.
8. Sarah Jane Cervenak, *Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 27.
9. Adrienne Edwards, "Blackness in Abstraction," *Art in America* 103, no. 1 (2015): 62.
10. Fumi Okiji, "Oriki for Don Cherry: To Be Part of a Gathering-Work," in *Organic Music Societies*, ed. Lawrence Kumpf, Naima Karlsson, and Magnus Nygren (New York: Blank Forms Editions, 2021), 424.
11. Okiji, "Oriki for Don Cherry," 423.
12. See initiatives set by Alain Locke, the Chicago Women's Club's exhibition *The Negro in Art Week* (1927), and "The Harlem on Whose Mind" protests of the Met's *Harlem on My Mind* exhibit that, in the words of the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, "omitted painters and sculptors who also contributed to the cultural development of Harlem, misused or otherwise ignored the body of black advisors to the exhibition . . . imported people from outside the Harlem community to work on the exhibition and ended up producing an audio-visual exposition with neither logical sequence nor adequate explanatory informa-

tion.” Kelly Baum, Maricelle Robles, and Sylvia Young, “‘Harlem on Whose Mind?’: The Met and Civil Rights,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, February 17, 2021, https://www3.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2021/harlem-on-my-mind; Chicago Women’s Club, *The Negro in Art Week* (Guston, 1927).

13. Bridget R. Cooks, *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 1.
14. “History,” ArtistsSpace.com, accessed June 5, 2023, https://artistsspace.org/history/.
15. Andy Battaglia, “‘Committedness and Tenacity’: Artists Space Director Jay Sanders on a New Era for Downtown New York,” ARTnews.com, December 19, 2019, https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/artists-space-jay-sanders-1202673270/.
16. Battaglia, “‘Committedness and Tenacity.’”
17. Pew Center for Arts, “In the News: Ars Nova Workshop’s Citywide New Paths Festival,” April 21, 2014, https://www.pewcenterarts.org/news/news-ars-nova-workshops-citywide-new-paths-festival.
18. The implications to link Black life to improvisation appears here not only as a figurative or theoretical metaphor but also takes seriously Milford Graves’s medical research in the studies of the heart rate and his own musings on how one can detect an unhealthy heart by paying close attention to its rhythms. According to Graves, “If you’ve got a stiff heartbeat, that means your blood is like ‘squirt, squirt.’ Not a nice flow.” As emphasized by an NPR article covering his research, “Graves says a healthy heart—like a good jazz drummer—emphasizes the triplets (1-2-3, 1-2-3), not the eighth notes (1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4).” Joel Rose, “Music of the Human Heart May Hold Clues to Healing,” NPR, February 28, 2005, https://www.npr.org/2005/02/28/4510912/music-of-the-human-heart-may-hold-clues-to-healing.
19. Fred Moten, “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 754.
20. See also Christina Elizabeth Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).
21. Corey Kilgannon, “A Jazz Drummer’s Fight to Keep His Own Heart Beating,” *New York Times*, August 5, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/05/nyregion/milford-graves-drummer.html.
22. Ahmed Alhamisi and Harun Kofi Wangara, eds., *Black Arts: An Anthology of Black Creations* (Detroit: Black Arts Publications, 1969), 40–41.
23. https://twitter.com/ArsNovaWorkshop/status/1388853512151384065?s=20.
24. Okiji, “Oriki for Don Cherry,” 424.
25. Tina Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 72.
26. Campt, *Listening to Images*, 17.
27. Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, 94.
28. Kofsky, *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, 147.
29. John Sinclair and Robert Levin, *Music & Politics*, Jazz & Pop Book Series (New York: World Publishing, 1971), 75.
30. Marvin X, “An Interview of Milford Graves,” in *Black Art Black Culture* (San Francisco: Journal of Black Poetry Press, 1972), 15. Document also currently available at https://www.freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC32_scans/32.Various.BLM.Black.Art.Black.Culture.pdf.
31. X, “An Interview of Milford Graves.”
32. Cervenak, *Wandering*, 52–53.

33. Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 26.
34. Fumi Okiji, *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 51.
35. Attali, *Noise*, 138.
36. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 16.
37. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 22.
38. Baraka, *Black Music*, 180.
39. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 18.
40. Attali, *Noise*, 111–112.
41. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 19.
42. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 19.
43. Carter Mathes, *Imagine the Sound: Experimental African American Literature after Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 30.
44. X, "An Interview of Milford Graves," 17.
45. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wO9UCV5APPA&ab_channel=uaua.
46. Kevin Laskey, "Signifyin(g) with the Dead: Musical Memorialization at John Coltrane's Funeral," *Music & Literature*, July 13, 2017, https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2017/7/13/signifying-with-the-dead-musical-memorialization-at-john-coltranes-funeral.
47. Tavia Nyongó, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 3.
48. Baraka, *Black Music*, 200.

## Works Cited

Alhamisi, Ahmed, and Harun Kofi Wangara, eds. *Black Arts: An Anthology of Black Creations*. Detroit: Black Arts Publications, 1969.

Attali, Jacques. *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.

Baraka, Amiri. *Black Music*. New York: W. Morrow, 1967.

Battaglia, Andy. "'Committedness and Tenacity': Artists Space Director Jay Sanders on a New Era for Downtown New York." ARTnews.com, December 19, 2019. https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/artists-space-jay-sanders-1202673270/.

Baum, Kelly, Maricelle Robles, and Sylvia Young. "'Harlem on Whose Mind?': The Met and Civil Rights." Metropolitan Museum of Art, February 17, 2021. https://www3.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2021/harlem-on-my-mind.

Campt, Tina. *Listening to Images*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017.

Cervenak, Sarah Jane. *Wandering: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

Chicago Women's Club. *The Negro in Art Week*. Guston, 1927.

Cifor, Marika, and Jamie A. Lee. "Towards an Archival Critique: Opening Possibilities for Addressing Neoliberalism in the Archival Field." *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 1, no. 1 (2017).

Cooks, Bridget R. *Exhibiting Blackness: African Americans and the American Art Museum*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2011.

Edwards, Adrienne. “Blackness in Abstraction.” *Art in America* 103, no. 1 (2015): 62–69.

Hartman, Saidiya. “Venus in Two Acts.” *Small Axe: A Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14.

Kilgannon, Corey. “A Jazz Drummer’s Fight to Keep His Own Heart Beating.” *New York Times*, August 5, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/05/nyregion/milford-graves-drummer.html.

Kofsky, Frank. *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970.

Laskey, Kevin. “Signifyin(g) with the Dead: Musical Memorialization at John Coltrane’s Funeral.” *Music & Literature*, July 13, 2017. https://www.musicandliterature.org/features/2017/7/13/signifying-with-the-dead-musical-memorialization-at-john-coltranes-funeral.

Mathes, Carter. *Imagine the Sound: Experimental African American Literature after Civil Rights*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

Micallef, Ken. “Heart Specialist: Philadelphia Exhibit Honors the Many Accomplishments of Milford Graves.” *JazzTimes*, November 20, 2020. https://jazztimes.com/features/profiles/heart-specialist-exhibit-honors-many-accomplishments-milford-graves/.

Moten, Fred. “Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh).” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (2013): 737–780.

Nyongó, Tavia. *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.

Okiji, Fumi. *Jazz as Critique: Adorno and Black Expression Revisited*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018.

———. “Oriki for Don Cherry: To Be Part of a Gathering-Work.” In *Organic Music Societies*, edited by Lawrence Kumpf, Naima Karlsson, and Magnus Nygren. New York: Blank Forms Editions, 2021.

Pew Center for Arts. “In the News: Ars Nova Workshop’s Citywide New Paths Festival.” April 21, 2014. https://www.pewcenterarts.org/news/news-ars-nova-workshops-citywide-new-paths-festival.

Quashie, Kevin Everod. *Black Aliveness, or a Poetics of Being*. Black Outdoors. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2021.

Rose, Joel. “Music of the Human Heart May Hold Clues to Healing.” NPR, February 28, 2005. https://www.npr.org/2005/02/28/4510912/music-of-the-human-heart-may-hold-clues-to-healing.

Sharpe, Christina Elizabeth. *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Sinclair, John, and Robert Levin. *Music & Politics*. Jazz & Pop Book Series. New York: World Publishing, 1971.

X, Marvin. “An Interview of Milford Graves.” In *Black Art Black Culture*, 15–24. San Francisco: Journal of Black Poetry Press, 1972.

# “Jazz Steel”: The Vibrancy of Rooms and the Acoustics of Genre at Jazz at Lincoln Center

*Tom Wetmore*

## *Abstract*

*This article ethnographically analyzes the unique acoustic properties of Rose Theater, a lavish 1,300-seat concert hall at Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC) in New York City, arguing that the room itself is both a vibrant participant in live performance and a humanly shaped artifact through which musical genre is contested and inscribed. As the premier performance space in JALC’s $125 million multipurpose facility, considerable investment was dedicated to designing Rose Theater “specifically for the sound of jazz.” Investigating how JALC went about fulfilling this goal through innovative acoustic engineering reveals how the institution’s aesthetic and ideological values were encoded in the raw materiality of the room and its surrounding architecture—what JALC’s artistic director Wynton Marsalis evocatively describes as “jazz steel.” Building on extensive fieldwork with stage technicians, acousticians, and musicians, I orient my analysis around a key trope evoked by my interlocutors: that Rose Theater “responds well” to some sounds and not to others. I explore this notion through two primary examples: performances by the largely unamplified Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO) and a heavily amplified electric ensemble led by bassist Marcus Miller. While the room’s particular ways of patterning vibrations make the JLCO sound “at home,” the same acoustic properties present an array of complications for the Miller ensemble. I show how the room actively conditions human action while contributing unpredictably—even creatively—to live musical performance, while opening up novel ways to understand how acoustic architecture mediates the symbolic, political, and affective valences of racial difference.*

**Jazz & Culture** Volume 7, Number 1 Spring/Summer 2024
© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

***March 30, 2019***

*"This room doesn't respond well to loud electronic sound."*

*These words are spoken by David Gibson, head sound engineer at Jazz at Lincoln Center (JALC), the influential performing arts institution. The room he's referring to is Rose Theater, JALC's celebrated 1,300-seat concert hall, one of three upscale performance venues housed in the organization's lavish multipurpose complex in New York City. It's about 11 a.m., and Gibson is taking a brief pause from a frenzied day of preparations to tell me some of his concerns about tonight's concert, led by electric bassist Marcus Miller. Buzzing around us, Gibson's crew of audio technicians are hustling to load in and set up all manner of amplifiers, instruments, microphones, cables, and other equipment—and as the piles of gear swell on the stage, a weighty air of uncertainty pervades the space.*

*Gibson is particularly concerned about the sheer magnitude of acoustical energy that all this gear will produce. Miller's ensemble performs almost exclusively on electric instruments, all heavily amplified. What effect will all the anticipated "loud electronic sound" elicit from the raw materiality of the physical environment that surrounds us—the walls, the floors, the seats, the scaffolding, and the constellation of other materials that form what we call a "room"? While Rose Theater was carefully designed to react in an aesthetically pleasing way to certain kinds of musical sounds, Gibson, like other technicians consulted in my research, knows that Miller's style of music—and the way it's amplified—is a poor acoustic match to this physical space. He fears that this room, which he helped design and where he comes to work every day, simply won't "respond well."*

* * *

This article explores what it means for a room to "respond" to sound and what human values and judgments are involved in designing a room that responds well to some sounds but not to others. I argue that physical rooms constitute vibrant, impactful participants in musical experience, challenging conventional understandings of the built environment as the neutral and non-agentive "background" for the more impactful activities of human agents. Using Rose Theater as my primary exhibit, I open new questions about how rooms, through their manifold acoustical attributes, mediate a range of social and musical relations, some of them purposefully enacted by human designers and some of them emerging from a range of unpredictable human/nonhuman interactions. A crucial analytical axis is the concept of genre—specifically as it relates to contestations over jazz and its definition. What jazz is, who can stake claims to it, and who benefits from the construction of its history have all been key questions throughout the music's existence. While the construction of jazz as a genre has primarily been discussed in terms of written discourse (historiography, music criticism, etc.) or canons of musicians, performances, and recordings, I propose closer attention to the built environment as a modality through which jazz's musical and nonmusical attributes are negotiated.

This article builds on five months of participant observation embedded with David Gibson’s stage crew—which often involved nights ending past 2 a.m. and mornings starting well before 8 a.m.—as well as a longer multiyear period investigating other spaces and topics at JALC. During this time, I had access to virtually all aspects of JALC’s technical operations, and I was warmly received by important leaders involved with the facility’s design and day-to-day operation, including everyone from JALC’s charismatic director Wynton Marsalis to major acousticians, architects, and sound system designers. Some shared notes, photos, schematics, and countless other pieces of data crucial for piecing together the material sonic story of Rose Theater contained in these pages. I was never denied a single request for access or information.

JALC has proven to be an ideal site for this investigation, not least because the organization has profusely proclaimed that Rose Theater, like the rest of JALC’s performance spaces, was built “specifically for the sound of jazz.”[1] JALC has promoted this claim vociferously in the press, and my research confirms that this goal was pursued with both sincerity and zeal. To design the facility, JALC recruited a collection of some of the most elite acoustics and engineering firms, widely promoting them as the “Sound of Jazz” team. The team dedicated itself to deciphering what the “sound of jazz” might mean—especially what it means to Marsalis—and little expense was spared in encoding that vision into the building’s material structure. Unlike the countless other spaces where jazz has been played—indoor clubs, symphony halls, outdoor festivals, and so forth—JALC’s physical residence was the first to be designed from the ground up with jazz music in mind. This fact is crucial—for designing a room for the sound of jazz necessarily entails making corresponding assertions about *what jazz is* in the first place.

JALC is well known for taking the question of jazz’s definition exceedingly seriously. For more than thirty-five years, the organization and its leadership have consistently and energetically posed unapologetic pronouncements about the musical and extramusical meaning of jazz and its role in the cultural and political life of the United States (and, to a lesser extent, abroad).[2] Consider, for example, Marsalis’s 1988 opinion essay “What Jazz Is—and Isn’t.” Written to celebrate a “Classical Jazz Series” that later evolved into Jazz at Lincoln Center, this article defends a “purist ethic in jazz,” staking out numerous claims for jazz’s “esthetic elevation.” Among other things, Marsalis advocates a canonical approach to establishing a “serious hierarchy of musical giants” while rooting the music securely in a particularistic articulation of “tradition.”

JALC’s prominent role in contestations over the meaning of jazz heightens the significance of questions about physical rooms as mediators of meaning and experience. While JALC’s activities have been hotly debated and widely discussed (both in scholarly and popular writing), attention has been paid almost exclusively to the domains of words (what JALC has *said*) and musical style (what forms of jazz performance are programmed or endorsed by JALC). Kimberly Hannon Teal's book *Jazz Places: How Performance Spaces Shape Jazz History* makes one of the most compelling cases for performance spaces themselves as shaping the way jazz music can be played and how its histories come to be defined.[3] In discussing JALC, Teal demonstrates how the institution's stages serve as crucial sites through which live performance functions as a mode of canonization and musical definition, fundamentally shaping what jazz is, who has access to it, and how it is interpreted. I further such discussions by focusing on how the specifically material aspects of sound actively shape contestations over musical and extramusical meaning. As such, I emphasize how JALC's institutional ideals about jazz are inscribed into the very physical matter that constitutes JALC as an assemblage of material artifacts—and how, most basically, the rooms *sound*.

So, when David Gibson told me that Rose Theater doesn't "respond well to loud electronic sounds"—and in particular the anticipated performance of Marcus Miller's ensemble—a host of interpretive problems revealed themselves. Most fundamentally, if Rose Theater was designed for "the sound of jazz," what does it mean that the room does not "respond well" to the sounds of Marcus Miller's band? How does the sound of the room shape or contest claims of Miller's music to be jazz? What does this mean for "electric sounds" or any other sonic materials to which the room doesn't "respond well"? How do the room and its acoustical responses shape the way JALC conceptualizes and promotes jazz? And, finally, what can we learn about what any room can say—or do—about the question of what jazz is? Or, for that matter, any other musical genre?

Exploring these questions will point toward new ways to think about how the architectural acoustics of music venues enact, in material form, values and judgments about musical style and genre, while at the same time challenging conceptions of live performance as a human-only affair. By mediating musical and extramusical sound, the room itself, through its distinctive ways of shaping mechanical vibrations, registers an array of social values and shapes social action. Most specifically, I reveal how the materiality of acoustic sound is deeply entangled with symbolic meanings and affective feelings of racial difference. Such issues have long been crucial to understanding jazz and other sonically "marked" musical forms. Building on scholarship from jazz studies, science and technology studies, human geography, and new materialism, this article opens up new ways to think about how acoustic architecture, and the sonic behavior it conditions, mediates the symbolic, political, and affective valences of racial difference as filtered through negotiations of musical genre.

My main ethnographic examples articulate two contrasting types of jazz performance. The first is represented by the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, a repertory big band especially suited for Rose Theater, offering a template for what the "sound of jazz" means for JALC. This group performs with almost no amplification, and the audio crew has to do comparatively little to make the show work. The second is the aforementioned concert by bassist Marcus Miller with an all-electric band, titled "Electric Miles." I document various ways the room doesn't respond well to the band's comparatively loud, low-frequency-heavy sounds (relative to the JALC ideal), necessitating additional labor from stagehands, adaptations from musicians, and modifications to the room's technological/acoustical architecture. Putting these examples in conversation reveals how an array of acoustical characteristics—including reverberation time, frequency response, and early reflections—encode musical and social values into the room's architectural structures.

In recounting how the room actively responds to musical sounds—prompting further actions from networks of humans and nonhumans—I aim to provide what Bruno Latour calls a "good account," one which "traces a network" of those exceptional moments when confederations of human and nonhuman actors reveal their influence. I craft ethnographic observations of assemblages of objects to help "make them talk, that is, to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce scripts of what they are making others—humans or non-humans—do."[4] In these pages, the room and its technologies "talk" quite a bit, prompting a conversation about JALC's complicated overlapping of western classical musical aesthetics with their particularistic interpretation of Black expressive culture. And, not unimportantly, a pointed resistance, traced directly to Marsalis's tastes, to electric instruments, electroacoustic technology in general, and various "fusion" constellations in jazz.

## "Jazz Steel": Matter, Materialism, and Institutions

Since late 2004, JALC has occupied a purpose-built $125 million facility perched five floors above New York's Columbus Circle, nestled between the two skyscraping towers of the Time Warner Center (see figure 1). In 2001, shortly after breaking ground on the new complex, Wynton Marsalis gave an extended interview to *New York Magazine*. At one point, strolling around the construction site with the interviewer, both donning hard hats, Marsalis paused to ruminate: "'Jazz steel,' Wynton notes, clutching a naked girder as the late-fall wind whips through the open superstructure. It is a phrase he likes, 'because we're not after something that is going to disappear. We're building an institution.' That's what people don't understand, Wynton says—the need for permanency."[5]

What could more aptly encapsulate the entanglement of music, politics, and physical matter than the notion of "jazz steel"? For Marsalis, the whole facility, down to its barest structural core, is meant to embed the supposed impermanence of improvisation and "swing" into the raw and durable built environment. "It's powerful symbology," Marsalis told me. "It means *this is important*. It's not an afterthought."[6] No longer transient or peripheral to American culture—a longstanding grievance for Marsalis and his intellectual cohort—jazz becomes literally durable and very tangibly a "thing."

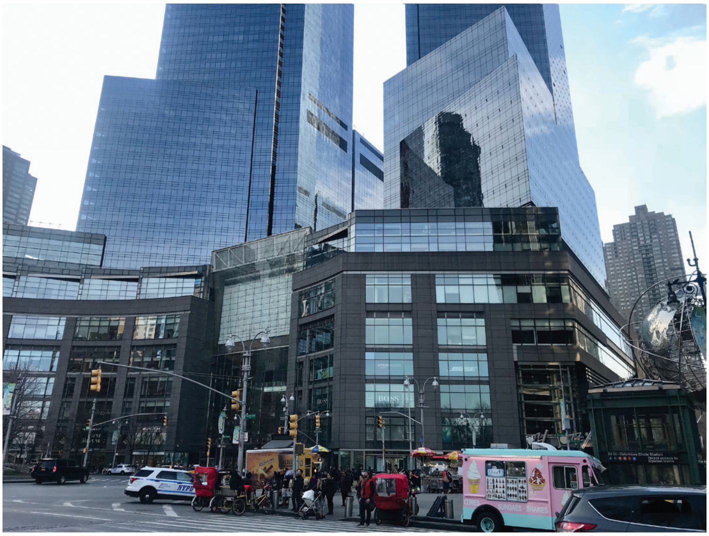


Figure 1: JALC's purpose-built $125 million facility, its home since 2004. Photo by Tom Wetmore.

With now-iconic panoramic vistas gazing over the East Side skyline and Central Park, JALC's prime real estate and affluent facilities—surrounded by luxury apartments, boutique restaurants, a five-star hotel, and a high-end shopping mall—elegantly encapsulate the institution's overlapping enmeshments with contemporary capitalism. To those who view jazz as a transgressive expressive culture more suited to basement clubs or bohemian loft spaces, such an alignment with blatant commercialism may be distasteful. As Lorraine Gordon, longtime owner/manager of the Village Vanguard, stated, "I love Wynton, he's the best. But jazz in a shopping mall? What's that about?"[7]

JALC and its leaders, acutely aware of jazz's precarious position in the commercial landscape, are famously deft at navigating the worlds of business and nonprofit sponsorship. As the "corporate headquarters" of jazz,[8] JALC has fostered an unrivaled network of private and public sponsorship, amassing a $60 million endowment and more than $200 million in net assets.[9] Among its many activities, JALC hosts well-attended concert series in its three performance venues. In addition to Rose Theater, JALC's flagship, the facility also includes the 483-seat Appel Room and the 140-seat Dizzy's Jazz Club. JALC also sponsors the most well-funded and widely deployed educational efforts in jazz, offering all manner of classes, workshops, and after-school programs, both in New York City (on the JALC premises and throughout the city) and across the country.

JALC has wielded an outsize voice in the most heated controversies in the US jazz world, often sustaining considerable criticism. Adopting a pointedly canonical, conservative posture in its musical programming,[10] JALC has reinforced a "heroic narrative"[11] of jazz history, extolling a select cadre of historical legends that reinforce Marsalis's aesthetic and historiographical articulation of the "jazz tradition." This vision of jazz has prompted various observers to describe JALC as "conservative" or "neoclassical"—often taking exception to the exclusionary logic of the organization's canonical orientation.[12] Emphasizing tropes of elegance and cooperation through conflict, musical concepts like "swing" and the "blues" are framed not only as required musical attributes of a jazz aesthetic but also as master tropes for an ideal (African) American life of dignity and style.[13] JALC celebrates jazz as a triumphalist metaphor for US democracy—one in which an oppressed people overcame a racial identity imposed upon them to ultimately lead the country into new and more swinging modernity.[14]

By asserting Black leadership at the heart of US cultural life, JALC has been a prominent voice in conversations over how Black cultural production is viewed and hierarchized within the US racial order. Championing a vision of jazz as high art, JALC has consistently challenged some of the stubborn racist myths about the sounds of Black Americans. Though certainly not the first powerful voice to assert the uplifting potential of jazz-as-art, JALC has claimed a distinctive position of cultural leadership, not least through its association with Lincoln Center and that organization's preeminence in Eurocentric art worlds. And by pointedly placing Black musicians at the forefront of the project, JALC has been a positive force in challenging certain aspects of the US racial imaginary while interjecting Black culture into the heart of US modernity. Even some of JALC's and Marsalis's most resounding critics have acknowledged that the organization's successes have been "remarkable by any standard."[15]

But while JALC has challenged many racist myths about Black inferiority, claiming considerable cultural and symbolic capital for Blacks in the US cultural hierarchy, critics have noted a range of concerns. One prominent critique scrutinizes how JALC's "traditional" approach denies legitimacy—and thus essential symbolic and material benefits—to perspectives, social groups, and aesthetics that don't align with Marsalis's vision of the "jazz tradition."[16] JALC has been generally unaccommodating to more experimental currents in jazz and other forms of Afrological improvisation, as well as an array of electrified "fusion" styles (discussed further below). Moreover, JALC's vision of the jazz tradition has attenuated many of jazz's progressive and politically oppositional aspects,[17] proffering a distinctive brand of US exceptionalism that downplays the music's rich involvement in the transnational exchange of culture and ideas.[18] JALC has been further critiqued as entangled with the logics of US imperialism[19] and the colonialist power structures of global capitalism.[20] A still under-addressed issue has been JALC's construction of jazz and its history through the lens of a "primarily male collective identity," where women are often treated as outsiders or special cases.[21] While my primary purpose is not to rehash these critical conversations here, I illustrate novel ways to investigate how such problems are negotiated not only in words and music but in the physical materiality of sonic performance—and the "jazz steel" of the built environment.

* * *

Throughout the design and construction process, Marsalis was adamant that JALC's new home should be just as impressive as the facilities built for other constituents of the Lincoln Center organization. As Mark Jacobson writes, recounting an interview with Marsalis, "There was no reason, Wynton said, no reason at all, that jazz, America's 'greatest art form, a democratic triumph of order and beauty over chaos,' shouldn't be accorded the same status as 'European Lincoln Center constituents' like the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Ballet, and the New York Philharmonic."[22] Marsalis has taken exception to how jazz has been forced to adapt to spaces meant for entirely different purposes while classical musicians and groups have long enjoyed halls designed to suit their particular aesthetic characteristics.[23] To erect a purpose-built facility for jazz, then, was fundamental to Marsalis's longstanding mission to assert for jazz the "same respect"[24] as classical music.

By constructing the new complex, JALC claimed significant cultural and political capital both for itself as an institution and for the vision of jazz it promotes. At its new residence, jazz was made to lie materially and symbolically at the center of the American metropole, thus holding a pivotal space in the cultural imaginary of "the West." With a purpose-built physical home, JALC rendered jazz as a stable object of capital and political investment, endowed with a solid, material permanence.

These were not only symbolic achievements. According to sociologist Thomas Gieryn, "Buildings stabilize social life. They give structure to social institutions, durability to social networks, persistence to behavior patterns."[25] By patterning spatial experience, buildings make certain practices more possible than others, certain meanings more influential—and in this way "the interests of powerful voices in the design process are etched into the artifact itself."[26] At JALC, I am interested not only in how powerful voices inscribe their judgments about jazz into "jazz steel" but how these inscriptions are revealed *in sound*. The first step in this inquiry is to ask, what does "jazz steel" sound like, and what are the consequences for human and nonhuman social behavior? To proceed, it is necessary to first examine what actually happens, on a material level, when a room responds to sound.

## "The Golden Tail": Acoustics for the Sound of Jazz

During any sound event, vibrations first emanate from the sound source in all directions, in all three dimensions. Imagine arrows emanating from a musician's instrument. The arrows point up, down, left, right, and every angle in between, each one representing a linear path of compressions and rarefactions that we call acoustical "sound." One arrow travels in a straight line to the listener's ears. We call this the *direct sound*, and it always arrives earliest and loudest. The waves represented by all the other arrows will either dissipate in the air or encounter one of the countless solid bodies in the room—walls, chairs, musical instruments, human bodies, and so forth. Some of these waves will be entirely absorbed, while others will be reflected on a new path. Most will be only partially absorbed, allowing an attenuated remnant of the original sound to continue on—now with a modified vibrational profile. Many of these surviving waves will meet another solid object, which will, like before, either absorb them or reflect them on a new course.

A particular array of reflections will encounter exactly one reflective surface between the source and the listener. These are called *early reflections*, *first reflections*, or *early energy*. For each emission of sound, an array of early reflection paths find the listener's ears: one path might bounce off a particular place on a wall before going to the listener, another might bounce off the ceiling, and so on. Since each of these paths take a different route to the listener, each will arrive at the ears at a different time, and at a slightly different strength. The brain processes these minute differences, including variations between the left and right ears, into spatial perceptions, allowing listeners to aurally locate a sound source in space or get an unconscious feeling for the size, shape, and general acoustical affect of the room and its occupants.

Many more waves only arrive at the ears after a much more circuitous journey, having reflected off surface after surface, accumulating into a "tail" of lingering sound we call *reverberation* (also commonly referred to as *late reflections* or *late energy*). When someone speaks of the "sound" of a room, reverberation is usually the most important acoustical factor—which makes sense, considering you can actually *hear* reverberation. In contrast, early reflections arrive at the listener's ears so soon after the direct sound that they are essentially indistinguishable from the sound source itself, though they do provide crucial unconscious aural feelings. Reverberation sustains an original sound for a consciously perceptible length of time—a period quantified as *reverberation time* (RT) and usually described in seconds and fractions of seconds—in contrast to early reflections, which by conventional definition arrive in the first eighty milliseconds after the direct sound.[27]

Reverberation gives listeners a sense of whether a space feels "dry" or "dead" (little reverberation) versus "wet" or "alive" (a lot of reverberation). Reverberation may convey a sense of "participation from the room" or "energy."[28] It can provide a feeling of "intimacy"[29] by establishing an affect of vibratory proximity between listeners and the material environment (early reflections do this too). More generally, reverberation provides the core "sonic signature"[30] or "aural architecture"[31] of a particular space. Indeed, reverberation is often referred to simply as the "sense of space" itself.[32]

* * *

What sonic signature did JALC's decision makers desire for their performance spaces? The most dominant ideal was what Marsalis calls "the golden sound of jazz," a master trope for both the music's essential sonic aesthetics and the ideal acoustic environment for its performance.[33] Along with cognate terms like "golden tail" and "golden bloom," the poetic if cryptic notion of a "golden sound" was a primary mission objective for all the technicians tasked with designing Rose Theater's acoustics.[34] Which is to say that everyone knew the term, if not its actual meaning. Rarely did any of my interlocutors dare articulate precisely what Marsalis meant by the term—even those whose jobs had hinged on doing exactly that. More often, they'd defer to something like, "You'd better ask Wynton about that."[35]

It has never been a transparent matter to interpret Marsalis's opinions about sound—often expressed through evocative metaphorical language—into the specialist vocabulary of the professional acoustician. And it has been equally difficult to translate such ideas about sound into the physical architecture of a room. Though my research confirms that all technicians took seriously the idea of an acoustic environment made "specifically for jazz," it was not a simple matter to communicate with Marsalis and other nontechnicians. Russell Johnson, the project's top acoustician, initially responded to Marsalis's descriptions with confusion, stating, "What the f— is the golden tail?"[36] Indeed, as Marsalis told me, "I wasn't used to communicating in that language."[37] But make no mistake, Marsalis's opinions about sound are sophisticated and rigorously conceived. He has made a point of scrutinizing room acoustics (primarily in nontechnical terms) throughout his decades of performing in all manner of venues across the world. And no matter what "language" he used, my research confirms that his ideas were considered by all members of the organization to be virtually the only guidelines that mattered for establishing a "sound of jazz" to be encoded into JALC's acoustics.

Here is how Marsalis first described his ideal acoustics to me:

> I call it the . . . golden sound, where the echo has a glow, but that it's not so soggy in the bottom and the mids that you can't hear the bass and the drums. Because in our form of music the highs and the lows are sounding on every beat. So, you want to be able to hear the bass and you also want clarity on the highs. And the biggest thing was to make sure the tail is not too long—but that there *is* a tail. If you don't have a tail . . . it's really dry. . . . The common misconception about the music is it should sound like it's in a club [too dry for Marsalis]. Then you end up with a big concert hall with volume that's been sucked of all the life. So, we wanted the volume, but we wanted it to have life.[38]

In desiring a modest RT ("not too long"), Marsalis aligns with widespread common sense about acoustics for jazz. The basic idea comes from the presumption that jazz is more dependent than other musical styles on "transients," those sound events that are "intended to be perceived as distinct."[39] And because excessive reverberation may cause successive transients to blur together, thus getting "muddy," jazz should sound better with less reverberation.[40]

So, if Marsalis is right that jazz has "highs and the lows sounding every beat," excessive reverberation from the room's surfaces could overwhelm the direct sound from the instruments themselves and thus decrease intelligibility.[41] Put differently, if the RT is longer than the time between salient musical events (eighth-note cymbal hits, for instance), the lingering reverberation following one event will still be resonating when the next one comes, thus blurring them together. For certain music, like chamber, orchestral, or choir music, this blurring of one musical event into the next might provide an aesthetically pleasing "blend" between notes, or between musicians in a section—or even between all the sections of an orchestra. Or, it may provide a desired "fullness of tone"[42] that conveys an expansive feeling of spatial volume and symbolic grandiosity. It may also add a sense of spatial or spiritual transcendence—an airy quality to the space of musical performance that endows a feeling of autonomy from the everyday world.[43]

For Marsalis, these characteristics reflect distinctions between western classical and jazz aesthetics: "Most concert halls were designed for symphonic music, not jazz. Most of the time, we play in halls that have too much echo for our music. The tail of the echo is so long that it makes the music muddy. We have the drums playing all the time, which is not the case in symphonic music."[44] A modest reduction in the typical concert hall RT, then, was the first and most overarching way that the acoustics of Rose Theater were tailored to Marsalis's conception of jazz. Yet while Marsalis refers to this low-RT acoustic as "the biggest thing," he simultaneously pushes against "misconceptions" that jazz should be "too dry."[45] Indeed, unlike the stereotypical acoustic aesthetic of a jazz club (very low reverberation, among other things), which many consider to be a more "authentic" site of jazz performance—including members of the acoustics team[46]—Marsalis wanted a little more "air." For Marsalis, to mimic the low RT of such a space would be to sonically associate jazz too closely with a nightclub aesthetic that limits the music and its musicians. Nonetheless, across all the acousticians, theater designers, and other technicians I worked with, a lower RT was the most consistently cited "jazz-specific" factor in the room's design.[47]

## "Closing the Gap": Intimacy, Interaction, and Immediacy

As Bohlman and Plastino state, "Jazz is the art of the intimate."[48] Jazz demands interaction between musicians, listeners, and all sorts of human bodies sounding, listening, moving, and seeing.[49] Such ideals have been crucial to the widely accepted opinion that small clubs, jam sessions, and other close-quarters gatherings are paradigms of authentic jazz experience. In all my years doing fieldwork at jazz venues, I encountered no more prevalent trope for describing the ideal sonic environment for jazz than intimacy. "You listen to jazz in clubs that are very tiny sometimes," JALC acoustician Ed Arenius told me. "Trying to capture the immediacy of that, I think, was more our goal than anything else."[50] Beyond acoustics, intimacy is often discussed in music-analytical terms, such as the interplay between musicians with regard to melody, harmony, timbre, rhythm, and so forth. Some authors extend such tropes to social domains, such as the interaction between musical personalities and their social networks,[51] or to broader, transhistorical exchanges across matrices of tradition and cultural memory.[52]

To exemplify the importance of acoustical interaction and intimacy to the Rose Theater project, acoustician Damian Doria cites the trope of *call and response*:

> [Marsalis] definitely has a call-and-response thing that happens. And I'm sure it's not always the same people [in the audience], but they do respond to the music. Even in a formal environment, he wanted to have the sense of playing something and, you know, having somebody in the audience go, "*hm*." It's just *that* "*hm*" that is an important part of . . . the intangible part of jazz: that connection with the audience. . . . How you play with other musicians, on the stage, and how the audience responds to that is the unique thing that happens.[53]

Here, interaction takes a distinctly sonic manifestation dissonant with conventional notions of musical or discursive meaning: "that 'hm.'" It is often the barely audible grunt of appreciation or the hushed murmur of pleasure that allows us to connect, communicate, and call and respond. Not to mention the more overt shouts, cries, and claps between audiences and performers common to jazz performance—and a constellation of Afrodiasporic forms resonating with the trope of call and response.[54] Or even the inaudible but nonetheless affecting sense of *presence* of all those human and nonhuman things vibrating as a "swarm of vitalities."[55] Unlike a room dedicated to western art music, in which all non-musicians are "asked to be literally and metaphorically silent, so that the truth or beauty of the work could be heard in itself,"[56] Rose Theater is supposed to be a setting of active, audible interaction. This kind of interaction, which requires sensitivity to the subtlest of vibrational cues, is enabled more than anything by a sonic environment of *immediacy* and thus intimacy. How does a room foster this kind of environment?

To start, musicians, listeners, and other bodies must be *close*. A short geometrical distance creates a multisensory experience of proximity, a heightened sense of embodied copresence through vibration. Despite Rose Theater's considerable size (for a jazz venue), the slopes of the floors, positions of the balconies, and variable seating configurations are all meant to optimize the closeness between human actors and sound sources (see figure 2). Most important is the room's "in-the-round" configuration, which, according to numerous interlocutors, was *the* most important—and most jazz-specific—adaptation the team made.[57] In this configuration, the stage is surrounded on all sides by seating, providing an immersive sonic and visual

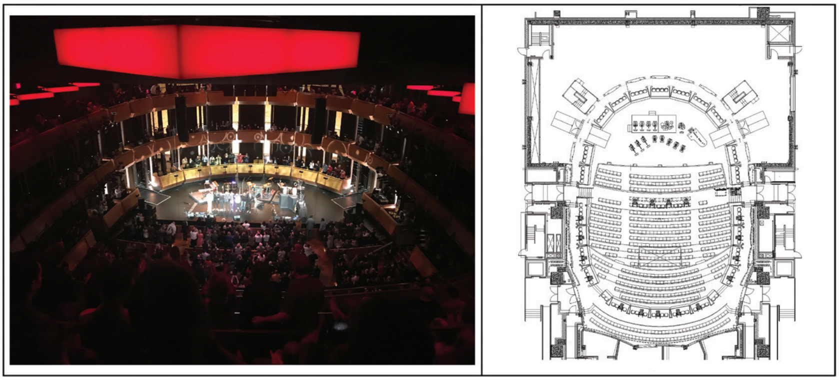


Figure 2: Rose Theater, seating and shape optimized for proximity.

experience. A more compact arrangement of bodies results in more direct sight lines and shorter paths of direct sound, and thus a more immediate experience. Because the sound travels a shorter average distance, what the listener hears is generally both louder (since it has had less of a chance to decay) and more temporally immediate (since it arrives more quickly).

Shorter physical distances also help the direct sound "outrun" the later reverberation by a few precious milliseconds, just enough time for the brain to (unconsciously) process the arriving vibrations before they're washed over by the later overlapping reflections. The wider the time gap between the direct sound and the onset of reverberation, the easier it is for a listener to pick out intricate sonic information.[58] Distinct and frequently changing musical materials (percussion patterns, rapid melodies, etc.) are thus more distinctly perceived.

A similar principle applies to first reflections: promptness counts. Recall that early reflections are those vibrational paths that arrive at the ears shortly after the direct sound, having reflected off only one solid surface. The earlier they arrive, and the greater their strength, the clearer and better defined the intricacies of sonic materials will be. Sound sources will also feel subjectively closer and more temporally *immediate* (delivering more acoustical energy to the ears earlier)—making the room feel more intimate and have generally higher energy. Here's the basic reasoning: in a smaller, more intimate space, with close walls, floor, and ceiling, the distance a packet of waves would travel to make the journey from source to surface to listener would be shorter, both in distance and time, than in a larger space (see figure 2). Designing Rose Theater's acoustics to provide early energy as quickly as possible is one way of mimicking the feeling of being in a smaller room with closer walls. Moreover, the highly reflective environment helps sustain the ineffable sense of energy and connectedness between listeners and the bodies that surround them. Further, strong early reflections, in conjunction with the quick arrival of direct sound, help listeners distinguish sonic details by getting plenty of sonic information to their ears before the arrival of the more blended and sometimes inarticulate late reverberation. In some ways, this principle was deployed to help counterbalance some of the negative consequences of the "golden" reverberation Marsalis desired.

Together, physical proximity and manipulation of early reflections allow the acoustics of the room to maintain a feeling of immediacy and intimacy despite the room's warm and enveloping reverberation. Marsalis's "golden sound of jazz" may thus be glossed as a balance between (1) the fullness of tone and feelings of spatial volume provided by reverberation and (2) the added clarity and intimacy provided by close proximity and strong and quick early reflections.

* * *

How are all these ideas about sound inscribed into the physical matter of the room? What did the design team actually *do* to attain these goals? Put more simply, what is it about the room itself that makes it sound the way it does?

The most impactful physical manifestation of Rose Theater's unique acoustical architecture is the array of hard, flat panels lining the "fronts" of all the balcony, mezzanine, and stage-level seating boxes around the room (see figure 3). (These panels are all generally referred to simply as "balcony fronts," even though many are not on balconies as such.) The bottom third of these inward-facing panels are carefully aligned to direct first reflections *down*, primarily for getting early energy quickly and strongly to human ears. They also beam sound to other hard surfaces for a general lively and high-energy environment. The panels' smoothness, hardness, and material composition (thick wood) mediate the strength and relative warmth of early reflections. Their proximity to the listener also ensures the reflections' strength, while additionally mediating their swift arrival to the ears. The top third of the panels directs sound generally upward, which both keeps the stage and orchestra levels from being overwhelmed with sound and directs early energy to the higher seating levels.

The panels near the stage are especially important, particularly those on the towers that surround the rear and sides of the performance area (see figure 3). This arrangement of reflectors is intended, for one thing, to riff on the notion of an

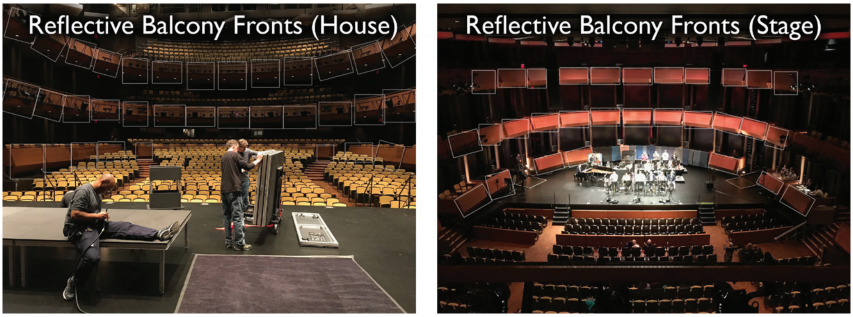

Reflective Balcony Fronts (House)
Reflective Balcony Fronts (Stage)

Figure 3: Rose Hall "balcony fronts."

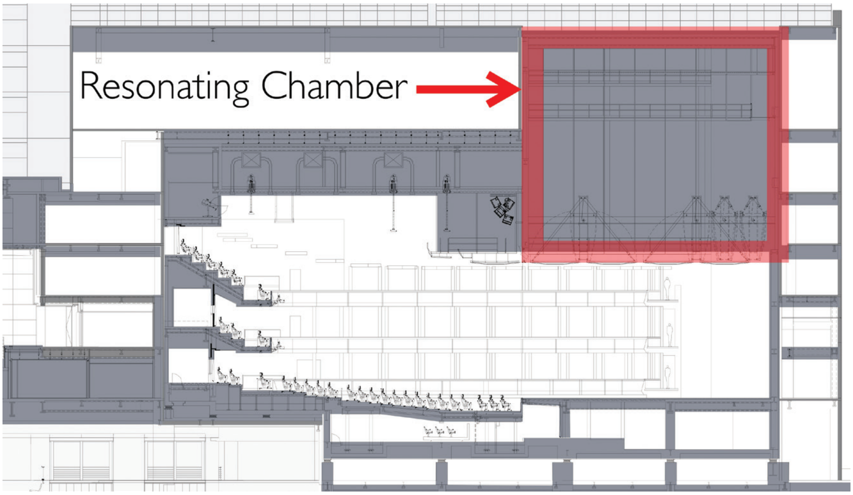


Figure 4: Rose Theater secondary resonating chamber. Adapted from illustration provided by Rafael Viñoly Architects.

acoustical "shell" (also known as an "orchestra shell" or "bandshell"). Commonly used in acoustic music, especially western classical, an acoustic shell is a hard, solid structure that envelops the stage and is meant to strengthen the sonic immediacy between musicians and to funnel sound toward the audience. Without such a structure, onstage sounds might feel unnaturally weak, and musicians might feel distant and disconnected from each other. Musicians might also feel unnaturally disembodied, since the lack of close reflective surfaces forecloses on the sense of acoustic emplacement most human beings are accustomed to (if only unconsciously) whenever dwelling in enclosed built environments.

In Rose Theater, the towers behind the stage, with their reflective balcony fronts, serve the same purpose as a shell: they reflect sound from the stage quickly and loudly to all the bodies on the stage—and only slightly less so to the bodies distributed throughout the rest of the room. Zooming out and thinking about the theater as a whole, it is fair to imagine the room's bathtub-shaped configuration, with reflectors lining all the seating, as one giant shell enclosing the whole theater, audience and musicians alike.

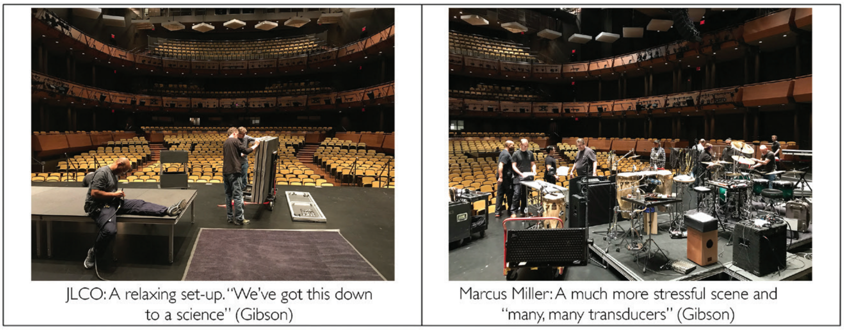
So far, I have been discussing only the earlier material encounters in a sound's journey around the room—direct sound and early reflections. The more temporally extended lingering of reverberation is provided principally by the room's total geometrical volume (the bigger the room, the longer the reverb) and the patterns of reflectiveness and absorption of all the surfaces in the theater—chair coverings, walls, soft goods,[59] human bodies, and so forth. Also, because it is "a pretty small volume room"[60] compared to many classical halls, Rose Theater contains a coupled resonating chamber far above the ceiling over the stage (see figure 4). This chamber creates additional physical volume far away from the stage, adding to the room's reverb "tail" without much interaction with the earlier reflections closer to the band and the audience. Importantly, because of the chamber's relative isolation from the rest of the room, the reverberation it contributes is significantly delayed, which makes it less likely to interfere with transients and other musical details. This is another way the room's designers attempted to balance the richness of reverberation with the transient-heavy genre characteristics presumed to be typical of jazz.

## "Who We Are": The Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra in Rose Theater

No one would dare say that a single band could stand in for a definition of jazz. But one could say with some confidence that, at JALC, one band more than all others is representative of what Marsalis calls "who we are": the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (JLCO).[61] This ensemble is the lifeblood of JALC's aesthetic universe. When Marsalis says Rose Theater was "made for us," the JLCO is the "us." When he says, "We've played in halls all over the world," the JLCO is the "we."[62] It is with this band that Marsalis won his Pulitzer, for which he writes commission after commission, and with which he releases album after album. As JALC's premier ensemble, the JLCO frequently performs with special guests, premieres new compositions, and presents special "theme nights."

Though the JLCO plays in all three of JALC's venues, Rose Theater is their "home."[63] Essential to this sense of home is the *sound* of the room, particularly the way it supports the band without "muddying" the sound with reverberation, giving it the right amount of energy without the need for amplification. As David Gibson told me: "I think that the idea that this room, you know, was built for the [JLCO] is proven by the fact that the orchestra plays here and it's natural architecture without any help [no amplification needed]. And then you get an amplified music show and then *you need to start doing things* in order to get articulation for the show."[64] As an audio stagehand, Gibson's job is about adaptation—getting different sonic productions to sound good under constantly changing conditions. And the magnitude of adaptation—that is, the *work*—required for JLCO shows is markedly less than most others. The room makes it easy for JLCO shows because it does so much of the work.

The question of work—"the need to start doing things," as David Gibson put it—is crucial to how the acoustics of a room condition human behavior and inscribe ideas about music and sound into the durability of "jazz steel." Certain sounds, and thus certain genres and even certain people, become more welcome than others precisely because they encounter different levels of resistance. The JLCO, and acoustic groups with similar sonic characteristics, are made to feel "at home" in JALC's rooms precisely because they encounter so little resistance. The room "responds well." For the audio crew, JLCO concerts, which David Gibson calls "known shows," are conspicuously relaxed (see figure 5). "We've got this down to a science," Gibson


JLCO: A relaxing set-up. "We've got this down to a science" (Gibson)

Marcus Miller: A much more stressful scene and "many, many transducers" (Gibson)

Figure 5: Comparing labor and technology, JLCO versus Marcus Miller.

told me. The musicians' chairs always go in the same places. So do the platforms on which the chairs sit. Microphone placing is the same, as is the cabling and patching. Overall, because the room's physical acoustics are so tailored to the JLCO's sonic characteristics, there really isn't all that much "audio" going on.

* * *

Rose Theater's unique relationship to the JLCO was made especially clear to me during a conversation with David Robinson during one of the countless JLCO sound checks and rehearsals I observed. Robinson is Marsalis's personal "sound man,"[65] and, with the rarest of exceptions, he is the only person to operate the mixing console or decide on microphone placement for Marsalis's groups. On this day, Robinson and I were seated behind the main mixing console at the front of house position, which is situated in the center of the house orchestra section (see figure 6). The JLCO was on stage sound checking for that night's concert, an eightieth birthday tribute to McCoy Tyner and Charles McPherson, featuring the music of and performances by both musicians.[66] As we talked, JLCO pianist Dan Nimmer was doing his best McCoy impression, a polite but nonetheless virtuosic performance combining deep and low pounding fifths in the piano's low end, quartal voicings in the middle, and fast eighth- and sixteenth-note runs in the highs and mids. The drummer, Joe Farnsworth, was splashing cymbals vigorously as the bassist, Gerald Cannon, pounded out a walking bass line, a pulse on each quarter note. No one else was in the hall save the stage crew, a few other JALC employees, the band and its entourage, and me.

Robinson was chatting with me about his disdain for noticeable amplification and loud volume overall. He told me about one day, years ago, when Marsalis asked him what he thought about hosting movie premieres in Rose Theater or having "TV shows coming in with the rock stars and shit." Robinson didn't like the idea.

"I don't think our room *wants* to get loud," he told me. "And I don't think it sounds good loud. But it sounds good moderate." As I encountered frequently while spending time in and around many performance venues, physical spaces and the

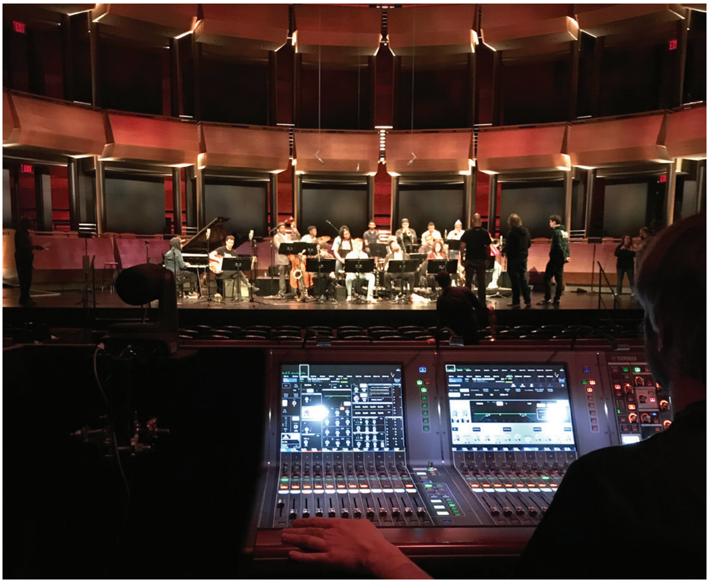


Figure 6: Front of house mix position (pictured: stagehand Alan Sheehy). Photo by Tom Wetmore.

technologies within them are often treated as subjects rather than objects. Robinson’s observance of what “our hall *wants*” is typical, if especially poetic. To Robinson, the hall is more than an object to be manipulated; it is a subject of action and desire.

What the hall wants, it seems, is the sound of the JLCO, which Robinson calls “our band”—an ensemble so well-tailored to the room’s sound it doesn’t really need amplification. This key characteristic, the ability to appropriately host a certain formation of jazz performance without the use of electroacoustic reinforcement, indicates the “sound of jazz” more than any other attribute in the theater. Indeed, as Robinson explained, he’ll sometimes do away with amplification altogether, even during a public concert: “When we play *mezzo piano*, when we’re playing at moderate tempos and such, and the drummer’s playing brushes. . . . I really just turn the things off and go away.”

At this point in the conversation, Robinson turned to face me: “If you notice, the PA’s off.” He gestured down at the “all mute” buttons, which, to my surprise, were activated. This meant the sound system was producing *no sound*. I hadn’t been listening closely to the music as we were talking, but everything had sounded perfectly adequate. Throughout our conversation, Robinson had been periodically jumping up to the stage to adjust microphones and talk to the musicians about how they sounded—so the PA must have been on at various points. But I hadn’t noticed any drastic differences in sound level, tonal quality, or relative balance between instruments. I was also aware that JALC had a philosophy—coming almost entirely from

Marsalis and Robinson—valuing minimal amplification. But it was still a surprise that the PA was entirely unused as we sat there.

"So, there's nothing?" I asked. Robinson punched the all mute buttons.

"Now it's on," he said. The difference was subtle. I could tell the bass and piano had more presence in the room; they didn't seem significantly louder, but they certainly seemed more articulate and easier to distinguish from the rest of the ensemble. Like always with the JLCO, it didn't seem like any of the sound was coming from the two giant speaker arrays framing the stage on the left and right. He tapped the buttons again.

"[It's] back off," he said. The piano and bass lost some articulation, sounding a little flabbier, a little more swallowed up in the mix. Individual notes were harder to make out. But the difference wasn't pronounced. The pianist was "comping" supportively at that moment, and while I would have desired more amplification if he'd been soloing, I didn't detect any glaring absence where the piano should have been in the ensemble's overall sound. The bass lost even more articulation than the piano, but as a basic harmonic presence it was recognizable and entirely functional.

Robinson then turned the PA back on and reached for a few faders on the left of the console—the customary place for rhythm section instruments. He grabbed two and started moving them up and down in tandem.

"That's the piano." As the faders went up, I heard the piano a little more, especially the feeling of individual keys and individual notes. The piano sound was now more defined, but it didn't really sound louder. He pushed the piano faders back down and then the adjacent two faders up, thus sending the bass to the PA.

"That's the upper articulation of the bass. It's the harmony and the motion of the bass." The bass, like the piano, changed in character rather than volume.

"But it's not that much," I said.

"No! It's very little. A moderate amount."

For the JLCO, the bass and piano are the only instruments amplified in any significant way. Robinson will tweak some of the other mics a little here and there, and they are indeed "hot" (active)—at least technically—but you'd be hard pressed to tell the difference if any mics were muted other than piano and bass. Or soloists or vocalists.

And since the room is designed to be "warm"—slightly boosting certain low and low-mid frequencies—the amplification of the bass isn't really about adding energy or "loudness." This became clear when Robinson muted the PA again, and I listened closely to the bass sound. It was a little more difficult to hear the individual attacks of the bass, which derive mostly from the higher frequency transients from the fingers on the strings, rather than the deep resonance of the instrument's body. Yet the main sound of the bass, and, most important, its function within the harmonic context of the musical performance, was still present.

Robinson turned the system back off, and we listened on as the trio on stage peaked in energy. He grinned with pride: "Almost no hall in the world, really, can you hear the walking bass like that with that drummer playing that loud."

My discussion with Robinson points to a key sonic tension between lightly amplified "acoustic" shows, like the JLCO, which require little human or technological labor, and amplified "electric" shows, which require both human beings and technological systems to "start doing things," in the words of David Gibson.[67] The relaxed preparations for JLCO shows are made possible in large part by the extremely sparing use of amplification. The JLCO doesn't even use stage monitors, the loudspeaker "wedges" meant to help band members hear themselves and each other. "Wynton prohibits monitors," David Gibson told me. To use them, according to the Marsalis philosophy—which filters throughout the whole building—would disturb the natural balance and blend of the band. It "colors your perspective."[68] Each musician, in this view, might listen more to the sound coming out of a monitor than their neighbor's actual instrument, which may lead to "unnatural" blending (inappropriate changes in tone, volume, articulation, etc.). In situations with more reinforcement from the sound system—where the audience gets most of the sound from speakers and not from instruments—such imbalances could be remedied by a competent mix engineer familiar with the desired aesthetic. The engineer might, for instance, bring down the level of one instrument and up another, or tweak the equalization or add dynamics processing—all trying to restore the aesthetically appropriate ensemble sound. Marsalis would have none of this if he could help it. Jazz, to him, is about the musicians, sometimes about the audience, but certainly not about loudspeakers. In the end, then, for JLCO shows it is the room that does most of the work that in other contexts would be delegated to audio technology and its operators.

## "Too Loud for Lincoln Center": Marcus Miller's "Electric Miles"

> *"It's just too loud, baby," Miller said, shaking his head. "Jordan, we'll have to turn it down. Too loud for Lincoln Center."*

The same reverberation that furnishes JLCO with its "golden sound" has a very different effect on louder, more amplified sounds. For acoustic groups, especially those with unamplified brass, reeds, and especially acoustic bass, there is a distinct advantage to the "in-the-round" seating configuration, which minimizes distances between bodies, as well as the purposefully "loud and fast" bloom of early reflections that provide immediacy and clarity.[69] For such ensembles, this acoustic environment facilitates clear hearing and feelingful interaction between musicians and others, and it creates a sense of immersion and intimacy between musicians and the audience. And it strengthens the overall energy of the sound through a kind of purely mechanical amplification. But all of this can get out of hand awfully quickly when there's too much sound energy coming from the stage.

A perfect example was the Marcus Miller "Electric Miles" show, which I turn to now. For this show, the stage was strewn with loudspeakers—whether encased in monitor wedges, stand-alone amplifiers, or unpowered speaker cabinets. The stage was home to electric basses and guitars, electronic keyboards and drum machines, saxophones and trumpets playing through pedalboards, and all manner of other electronic gadgetry (see figure 5). The mass of sound from these and other electronic sound machines was poised to overwhelm the carefully cultivated acoustic balance embedded in the room's material architecture. Or, better stated, the *room* was poised to overwhelm the space with its response.

"This is going to be wild and woolly," John Uhl told me first thing in the morning, before anyone else from the crew had arrived for the 9 a.m. load-in. Uhl is JALC's second head sound engineer. While he works almost exclusively in JALC's midsize venue, the Appel Room, on this day Uhl was tasked with assisting at Rose Theater because of the technical complexity of the Miller concert. "Rose is such a reverberant acoustic space," Uhl told me a few days before the show, "that to put that much electronic energy into the room—that's going to be a huge challenge."[70]

He was right. The whole day was a struggle—against loudness; against amplified vibrational energy; against "sound foci" (isolated spots where certain frequencies are disproportionally loud) and their associated "dead spots";[71] against the screech of audio feedback. Most pressingly, it was a struggle against what David Gibson calls "trash" or "garbage"[72] sound—the accumulation of excess acoustic energy in the mid- and low-frequency ranges. For, in this room, with all its vibrant reflectiveness, whatever sound bursts forth from the stage (or anywhere else) will inevitably be reflected *back* by the room—in largely unpredictable ways. Indeed, the same "in-the-round" configuration that supports acoustic groups like the JLCO by raising the acoustic energy through the liveness of its early and late reflections would only augment the incredible onstage energy from the band.

Unlike JLCO concerts, the morning and afternoon of this show were a flurry of stress and uncertainty. Early on, the crew convinced Miller to reduce the number of bass monitors and to move them from his preferred position at the downstage center of the stage. This was important because sound from that precise spot generally prompts the room to manifest a low-frequency focus down the center of the hall. But the biggest issues concerned the raw magnitude of sound energy the crew feared would be coming out of the profusion of speakers on the stage that kept accumulating as the load-in progressed.

There would be no perfect solution, but the first and best hope was to convince the musicians to reduce the number of monitor speakers while gently suggesting they dial back the volume. The crew also had to take care about the *orientation* of all the onstage sound sources. This meant carefully balancing how much sound to direct toward the audience (which can cause problems by throwing off the PA mix—and can *hurt* the ears) and how much to direct away from the audience (which can also cause issues, since it would direct sound at the room's most reflective surfaces). And they had to place, with considerable care, a batch of microphones that might catch any errant or extraneous sound, amplify it, and send it back into the monitors and sound system. Without the most vigilant transducer placement and sensitive mixing (muting certain mics when not in use, carefully shaping equalization to avoid feedback, etc.), all could go haywire. And when the moment finally arrived for all the musicians to plug in, it was still a mystery how the room would respond.

* * *

"Alright, let's make some sound." At about 4:45 p.m., Marcus Miller, bass in hand, was summoning his band to start sound check. Jeff Turner, the theater's master carpenter[73] and resident wisecracker, caught my eye. "I hope you got your ear plugs," he told me. Everyone knew it was going to be loud. Gibson and Uhl had been warning me for weeks. Fortunately, one of the audio stagehands, Allan Sheehy, overheard Turner's joke and found some ear plugs for me. I needed them.

After just a few notes of the band's first vamp, a simple repeated figure harmonized in fourths and fifths—complete with synthesizer, bass, guitar, and horns, most of them playing with distorted electronic effects in the mid and low frequencies—it was clear this performance would be unlike anything else in my fieldwork at this venue. When it all started, I was in the backstage wing, stage left, and I walked around the stage-level boxes hugging the stage. The sound coming from the stage (that is, from the band's own amplifiers and monitors) was so loud that I didn't even know if the room's sound system was on. It wouldn't have mattered anyway, since the onstage sound was so overpowering.

At one point, Gibson pulled me aside. "What we're seeing here is the idea that this stage is for acoustic music," he said. "You put many transducers on the stage—many, *many*—and it's very difficult to manage." On the stage were three stage monitors for the electric bass, along with the eight ten-inch speakers mounted in Miller's two amplifier cabinets. Each horn player—two trumpets and a saxophone—had their own wedge, sending both untreated "acoustic" sound and much more "electronic" sound filtered through a range of effects pedals. The keyboardist and drummer had two monitors each, the percussionist and guitarist one. The guitarist also had two powerful tube amplifiers so loud they had to be covered with sound insulation so substantial that one of them blew out from overheating. (Fortunately, they'd rented a backup.) All told, thirty-two speakers crowded the stage, not to mention a horde of microphones ready to contribute to feedback, phase effects, and all sorts of other potentially unwanted phenomena. While this magnitude of electroacoustic technology is common in the live music industry, it is extraordinary at JALC.

How did the room "respond"? All the sound coming off the onstage loudspeakers was sent right back by the flat reflective panels of the tower seat fronts surrounding the stage—only louder, lower, and more distorted. As expected, the low frequencies were the most problematic: the electronic keyboard's distorted left-hand work; the fat, fuzzy effects on the horns; the drummer's sub-bass effect on the bass drum; the percussionist's subharmonic bass pedal. The room was having none of it, sending all these sounds back lower, louder, and muddier.

The electric bass was especially troublesome. In JALC's ideal scenario, such as an acoustic group like the JLCO, the unamplified bass needs acoustic support (added loudness) to balance with the rest of the instruments. This support is provided by a highly reflective environment with a subtle low-frequency tilt (discussed above). But the calculus is entirely different for an amplified group—especially one with an electric bassist as featured soloist. The amplified sound of an electric bass is only made "tubby" and "boomy" as the room's highly reflective environment sends back wave after wave of overlapping bass energy. The characteristic attacks of each note become indistinct among the piles of muddy low-end "garbage"[74] that accumulate throughout the room.

As I walked around the theater during the sound check, I could hear and feel the overpowering energy coming off the monitors and onstage amplifiers, and, only somewhat less powerfully, how the smooth-pained reflectors on the surrounding towers were collecting waves and sending them back at the stage and all over the theater. The reflected waves had a subtly different personality—buzzier, a little thicker in the lows, and, most conspicuously, just plain muddy. Ideally, I'd be able to hear each instrument clearly and distinctly, but it felt like a cloud hovered over each instrument. Subtle details were submerged under an ocean of tones and distorted overtones—and the palpably shaking material architecture around me. Moreover, sound was accumulating unevenly over space. As I walked around the theater, I found noticeable vibrational hotspots, where it was not only especially loud but where I could feel a subtle hum vibrating the towers, boxes, stairs, and other bits of solid matter that surrounded me. Certain frequencies caused various parts of the theater to buzz and sometimes shake (surely the effect of various resonant frequencies of objects throughout the room). But all these issues were subtle compared to the raw energy in the space—the brute loudness and the accumulation of low-end sound.

To reduce the raw acoustical energy of the amplified music, Gibson and his crew had done everything they could to increase the overall absorption of the theater. The room's design gave them a range of options—for, although acoustic jazz was the top priority when it was built, Rose Theater was also intended to be a multiuse facility. It was thus constructed with a number of possibilities for altering its acoustics, including a movable ceiling that can change the room's overall volume, a system of sound-dampening curtains in the walls, and an array of additional "soft goods" to soak up excessive vibrations. As Gibson put it, the crew had "supermaxed out" the room's absorption for the Miller group's concert—deploying every available means.[75] In addition, in the preceding weeks Gibson had pushed hard with the band's management to reduce the number of transducers on the stage. But no one was surprised that the Miller band's sound would overwhelm any attempt to corral it into the venue's typical acoustic ideal.

It was not entirely in the band's interest to reduce their volume. They wanted to *hear* themselves. They wanted to hear each other. And they wanted to hear it *loud*. And even if the band's amplification conflicted with JALC's overall desire for "pure and clean sound,"[76] loudness was a meaningful component of the band's purposefully executed musical aesthetic—not to mention a way of getting in the groove and channeling musical energy between band members. A central tension thus emerged between providing the musicians with the energy they needed to attain their creative goals and minimizing the unwelcome acoustic effects of too much amplification. For the audio crew, the goal was to mitigate against potential disasters they could never quite predict—because sound has the capacity to surprise. The best the crew and the band could do was place the monitors at the most conducive angles—an iterative and complex process that sometimes seems as improvisational as the music—and hope that the band could feel the emotional energy they needed without too much onstage loudness. It wasn't easy.[77]

* * *

As day turned into night, tension steadily increased, peaking shortly after 7 p.m., a time when the musicians typically would have long since retired to their dressing rooms and stagehands would be casually socializing or attending to routine tasks. These are usually serene moments, when well-dressed house managers and ushers quietly sweep the seats and stack paper programs, readying the reposeful theater for the audience assembling on the other side of the doors. But not today.

"They're having a freak-out about how loud it is," one stagehand told me. "They" were members of JALC's Concerts Department, the organization's main aesthetic curators. It is the Concerts Department, overseen by Marsalis, that books the season's calendar and tends to the overall direction of JALC's programming. A representative of this contingent had entered the house and was huddled around the main console, along with Gibson, Miller's engineer (Jordan Long), and a stagehand on Gibson's crew. The band was on stage, and Miller was shuttling back and forth between the stage and the console. As Gibson told me later, the rep was concerned that "typical patrons" might not be receptive to the loudness in the room.[78] These patrons, which JALC takes considerable pains to cultivate, carry a lot of weight around the building. They subscribe to multiconcert packages or whole seasons, and some donate large sums to JALC. They are also more likely to show up to a concert like Miller's expecting a performance closer to JALC's aesthetic center—acoustic, lightly amplified jazz.

At one point, after conferring with the group at the front-of-house position, Miller returned to the musicians on stage. "It's just too loud, baby," Miller said, shaking his head. "Too loud for Lincoln Center." The band discussed how to reduce the energy while remaining faithful to their creative identity. As Miller put it, "We still gotta figure out how to do it with intensity." As showtime inched closer, the band continued to struggle to find the kind of interactional group feeling they are used to, one mediated largely by volume, not so much the subtle acoustic nuances the room was built for. The stage technicians were sensitive to their desires. Gibson told me he'd have no problem with distortion, mushiness, and general "garbage sound" if it allowed the musicians to "do their thing."[79] Doug Hosney, JALC's vice president in charge of the whole complex, also stopped by around this time, telling me basically the same thing: he always prefers to defer to musicians, for their comfort is paramount.

The band continued rehearsing, stopping every few minutes to discuss. After a little bit, I heard a voice from the front of house area: "Play out like you will during the show for maybe like five minutes." It was the rep from the Concerts Department wanting to feel just how loud it might get. The band obliged. From my position slightly off stage it didn't seem much quieter. Especially when the horns and guitar got into a call-and-response section, trading solos every eight bars, each eight getting louder and louder. They seemed to immerse themselves in the energy of the performance. From a distance, the face of the Concerts Department rep didn't seem any happier than before.

But it was time to open the house, and everyone had to clear the stage. Little seemed settled.

* * *

The concert was marked by tentativeness from the start. I'd expected something deafening based on the sound check and all the apprehension that surrounded it. But from my seat in the rear of the mezzanine, it started off surprisingly quiet. All the instruments seemed hushed, almost nervously so, except, unsurprisingly, Miller's bass, which boomed unevenly throughout the hall. The bulk of the sound seemed to be coming from the monitors and amps on stage, which could at least partially explain the imbalance among the musicians' sound levels. Miller's onstage rig, after all, had by far the most total speakers, and he wasn't shy about using them. The onstage imbalance in output was compounded by the room's physical reflectiveness and subtle "warming" coloration—to say nothing of the suboptimal reverberation time, which has the chronic tendency to disproportionately extend and "collect" low frequency energy. Indeed, despite the less-than-expected level of overall sound, the space was still permeated by bass, loud yet conspicuously lacking in clarity, definition, and evenness over the frequency spectrum.

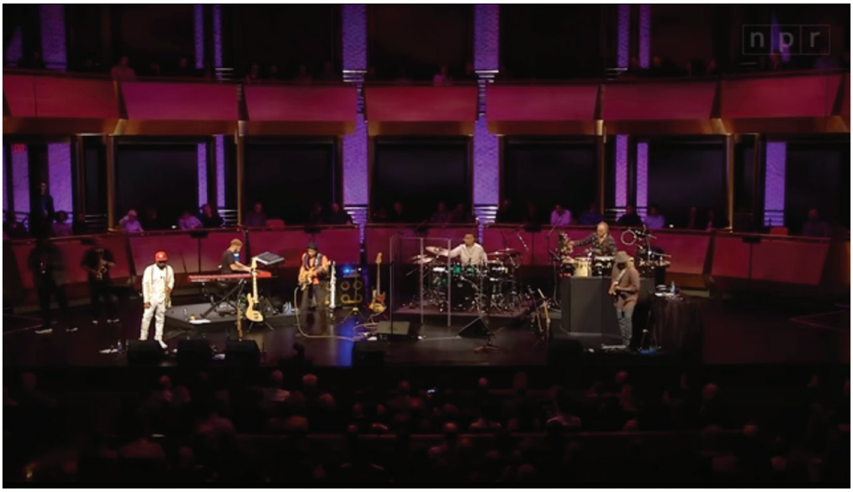


Figure 7: The Marcus Miller Ensemble at Rose Theater, March 30, 2019. Screenshot from YouTube.

But overriding all of these technical concerns was an unmistakable hesitancy on the part of the musicians, which manifested as an overall reduction in energy. "If it's a light volume," David Gibson later told me, "they don't have that same kind of psychological energy." It is no stretch to speculate on the primary cause: Miller's earlier prodding for the group to bring down their monitors. To me, having witnessed the tense scene between the Concerts Department and the band less than an hour earlier, it seemed only natural that the band—and the band's sound engineers—would have some apprehensions about turning up the volume. When I asked Gibson about this, he concurred: "I think your observation is right on, you know. *Because of the fears* . . . it sounded light." Indeed, the fear of overpowering the room, the fear of upsetting the institution and its patrons, seemed to be restricting the band from finding the usual "intensity" Miller referred to in the sound check.

But as the show went on, the musicians eventually found that intensity. How? In short, it got *loud*. Probably as loud as anyone had feared. It got distorted, and it got muddy. Various parts of the theater buzzed, hummed, and shook—others didn't. Judged on the criteria of purity of tone and spatial uniformity, the sound had little to recommend it. But as the energy increased, the band found a way to relax, to interact, and to enjoy—in Gibson's words, to "do their thing."[80] All of the instruments, now amplified considerably, seemed balanced relative to each other. (The low-end boominess never went away.) It felt almost as if a master compressor[81] had been applied to the whole room: the quieter instruments got significantly louder while the already-loud bass seemed to reach a peak, simply not able to get much louder.

The band was no doubt fueled by the changing disposition of the crowd, which became increasingly vocal and animated as the concert progressed. As David Gibson told me, "The typical audience, let's say for a Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra show—they would not have put up with that [loudness]. But it wasn’t our typical audience. It was Marcus Miller and Miles Davis. . . . That’s what they came to see.” The crowd’s spirited reaction likely put the musicians’ minds at ease over the concerns expressed by the Concerts Department earlier in the day. As the crowd got into it, the band did too, and the whole system got louder. Gibson added: “The audience was going crazy. . . . [There was] so much head boppin’ and in-seat dancing going on in that show.”

## “Some Rooms Make You Shout, Other Rooms You Whisper”

Despite the manifold challenges that the room’s acoustics imposed on the musicians, technicians, and other staff, the Marcus Miller concert was a success. But it took a series of negotiations to make it work. These weren’t only negotiations between musicians, or between musicians and the venue staff—though these were essential. It was also a series of negotiations across a network of human and nonhuman bodies, objects, and artifacts. The room, its reflectors, its absorbers, its angles, and its electroacoustic architecture all had to function in complicated, often unpredictable ways, along with human actors and their instruments and other technologies.

The performance was not a simple matter of human musicians making sound in a room and audience members listening to it. The room, and its component materialities, formed a “throbbing confederation,”[82] a collection of material actants through which the phenomenon of sound *emerged*. The ideas of uncertainty, surprise, and adaptation are key here. Miller, as I observed, was taken by the unexpected acoustic interactions his bass made with the room and how the rest of the band and its loudspeakers rattled and boomed throughout the space. These musicians, like any human being entering a new space, had to adapt to the environment. As did the technicians and the technologies they manipulated: transducers were moved and then moved again; frequencies were filtered; equipment was swapped out.

Sound moved and flowed in unpredictable directions, much like Jane Bennett’s description of the distributive agency of electricity: “Electricity, or the stream of vital materialities called electrons, is always on the move, always going somewhere, though where this will be is not entirely predictable. Electricity sometimes goes where we send it, and sometimes it chooses its path on the spot, in response to the other bodies it encounters and the surprising opportunities for actions and interactions that they afford.”[83] The same is true with sound, and especially so when lots of transducers are involved. Acoustic feedback, phase effects, and sound foci manifested spontaneously as swarming vibrations through gases and solids, inducing material associations among speaker cones, microphone diaphragms, human bodies, and all manner of physical matter. In short, by not “responding well” to the band’s electronic sounds, the room conjured myriad unpredictable sounds that required its human occupants to scramble to form new ways of relating, new ways of sounding, and new ways of associating with matter and technology.

From this perspective, it is difficult to imagine the room as passive or inert. Even to Wynton Marsalis, rooms exert a kind of agency. He told me: "You're going to talk differently in a different type of room. Some rooms make you shout, other rooms you whisper. I mean, the ambience of the room affects how you *are* in the room. . . . How you *are* in the room is affected by what the room *is* and the feeling of the room." These words should not be dismissed as figurative fancy. For it is not immediately apparent to most people that a room can "make you" do anything at all, let alone shout or whisper. But Marsalis means it. And one would be hard pressed to find a more apposite metaphor for the Miller group's oscillation between loud and soft or the audience's changing level of interaction over the course of the concert.

By responding to human and technological sounding, the room created undesirable acoustic effects that were patently conspicuous, enough to unsettle any casual misapprehension that space exists only to transparently transmit sound from one place to another—that it is a transparent and "vanishing mediator."[84] The room's mediation, as my observations have shown, is anything but vanishing—and anything but silent. It is thus best to think of Rose Theater in terms of Bruno Latour's notion of mediators as networks of objects that "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry."[85]

As one such mediator, Rose Theater has a profound capacity to influence not only the behavior of human and nonhuman actors, but to participate in and alter the meaning of the music that is performed there. I do not mean to argue that the acoustics of the room can enforce a coherent, self-contained definition of jazz as a musical genre or style. Instead, my fundamental aim is to provide a "good account"[86] of those moments in which associations between objects—which spend most of their time unnoticed—catalyze and shape events in remarkable, emergent ways. In tracing such networks, I have attempted to "make them talk."[87]

So, if I have made Rose Theater talk, what did it say? For one, my observations reveal a subtle hole in Marsalis's claim that the building is "a house of hospitality and style"—for in multiple ways the room was palpably inhospitable to Miller's amplified aesthetic.[88] The room pushed back, reflecting sound beyond the limits of conventional propriety and pleasure. The room's size, reflectiveness, and reverberance were all unfitting to the band's sound. This sound also encountered the extrasonic cultural boundaries represented by the reaction from the Concerts Department.

The room's sonic resistance to Miller's performance should not come as a surprise. Marsalis has taken particular exception to both "electric" instruments in general, jazz "fusion" more specifically, and Miles Davis's electric explorations even more specifically. Indeed, for Marsalis, electric instrumentation and amplification are paramount signifiers of musical styles specifically deemed *not* to be jazz. Marsalis often aligns such technological accoutrements with a kind of "selling out" that certain musicians (and music industry actors) too often, in his mind, perform while baselessly claiming the title of "jazz."[89] "The electric instruments make the musicians sound like they're playing toys when they play," Marsalis has said, calling electric jazz fusion "the death toll for jazz musicians."[90] To Marsalis, playing electric instruments is a true difference maker in contests over musical authority and, perhaps most important, authenticity: "suddenly a non-musician could be elevated above a *real* musician" (emphasis added).[91]

Marsalis has focused particular ire on Miles Davis's electric bands, once referring to the trumpeter's playing during his electric era as "some sad shit."[92] The worst of these bands, according to Marsalis and many other traditionalists, were those that followed the trumpeter's five-year retirement in the late seventies. Unlike the more respected preretirement 1960s and 1970s groups (which produced albums like *Bitches Brew* and *In a Silent Way*), the later bands were considered more "pop" oriented. As Ingrid Monson states: "To many critics of Davis's post-fusion music, his use of rock and funk grooves, synthesisers and electric guitars are sins that cannot be forgiven."[93] It is to this era that Marcus Miller belongs, and to which the concert was dedicated.

It is thus unsurprising that the room JALC claims is "built for jazz" exhibited a distinct resistance to the amplified jazz fusion Miller performed. The room's acoustic pushback thus elegantly inscribed in material form the institution's aesthetic and ideological disfavor for the sonic sensibilities Miller represented. According to Thomas Gieryn, physical buildings "stabilize social action by increasing the costs of subsequent tinkering or innovative use."[94] Certain actions encounter material recalcitrance; some actions are made easier. In the case of Miller's concert, the reaction of the room, and the amount of *work* required to overcome it, speaks considerably to the durability of the aesthetic values built into the room by its designers. If Gieryn is correct that "the interests of powerful voices in the design process are etched into the artifact itself,"[95] what were those interests, and how did they affect the "costs of subsequent tinkering"?

Recall David Gibson's assertion that Rose Theater was "built for" the JLCO and that this is "proven by the fact that . . . it's natural architecture without any help," in contrast to an amplified show, in which "you need to start doing things" to make it work.[96] It is perhaps on this point that the room's mediating agency is most concrete: *it places demands*—labor, technological, economic—on certain styles of sonic performance and not on others. The room *challenged* Marcus Miller's band, as well as the technicians and even the ideological arm of the institution (the Concerts Department). Such hindrances were notably missing—or at least very different—in the many days I spent observing the JLCO. The music Miller played, and its sonic production aesthetic, was thus placed in an unstable and uneasy relationship with the core definition of jazz that JALC attempts to stabilize and promote. Miller's musical style is not quite *excluded*, but the additional burdens make for an uneasy presence within the physical and ideological space of JALC as an institution. The room itself, and the way it responds, hinders the potential for Miller's music to feel "at home" in what Marsalis calls "the House of Swing."

I am not implying an insurmountable division between "jazz" and "not jazz." After all, a range of musical groups have performed at JALC that are in many ways dissonant with the jazz tradition implied by JALC's distinctive musical ideology. Not to mention the countless productions at JALC that assert no claim to being jazz—or, for that matter, music. (Among JALC's many rental gigs are classical and popular music shows, as well as a steady stream of "corporate" gigs—stockholder meetings, industry expositions, etc.) There are many reasons for JALC to bring in groups that might fit uneasily with the core jazz tradition, not least the need to bring in income or to expand the patron base.[97] Rose Theater, like the rest of the JALC facility, was designed with an essential level of adaptability with precisely these needs in mind.[98] But, as my research confirms, there is nonetheless an unmistakable set of aesthetic priorities at the center of JALC's sonic ideals.

So, what can we gather about the sounds that *are* meant to feel at home in this room? Perhaps the most resounding theme has been an emphasis on *acoustic*, unamplified sound, a "pure and clean" environment evocative of western classical aesthetics.[99] A special emphasis is placed on the acoustic bass, which requires careful treatment: just enough tonal warmth to provide support and a pleasing tone without so much low end as to lose articulation and clarity. Moreover, the size of the room, its reflectiveness, and its reverberance were tailored to the physical dimensions, stylistic characteristics, and overall sound level of one specific band, the JLCO.

By focusing on intimacy, immediacy, and interaction, acoustical qualities like swift and strong early reflections register ideas about jazz's core performance practices that are longstanding and not seriously disputed.[100] The emphasis on interaction and the need for musicians and audiences alike to hear overlapping, rhythmically and melodically dissonant musical statements resonate considerably with Marsalis's master trope of "swing"—which he often describes as a dancelike negotiation between the individual creative voice and the pulsating improvisational collective. That is, to "coordinate with something that is always shifting and changing."[101] A more rigorous interpretation might be found in Olly Wilson's proposal of a "heterogenous sound ideal," an approach to music-making Wilson locates in many Afrodiasporic musical forms. Such a system values "a kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of sound (timbre) in both vocal and instrumental music,"[102] as well as the overlapping of contrasting attacks, articulations, and various other performative nuances. Travis Jackson claims such a sound ideal to be pivotal to jazz performance practices, asserting it to be "diametrically opposed" to "the kind of 'blend' that orchestra players seek."[103] We may easily see this opposition between heterogeneous versus "blended" sound ideals in the acoustical characteristics outlined above. That is, over an array of acoustical modalities, JALC generally privileges intimacy, proximity, and interaction over "blend."

But we should not be tempted to dismiss "classical" sound ideals too quickly. For one, many of the acoustical characteristics I've been discussing—especially intimacy, immediacy, and clarity—are as much a part of the listening ideal in most classical art worlds as they are at JALC. Indeed, by emphasizing the acoustical communication of nuanced rhythmic, melodic, harmonic, and timbral details without coloration or distortion, the ontology of jazz conjured at Rose Theater is imbricated with a constellation of musical values underwritten by the "supposedly universal standards" of western art.[104] The jazz that is played in Rose Theater is meant to be appreciated for its complexity and sophistication, an endeavor of "deep study and concentration."[105] And it requires an appropriately pure and clean acoustical environment.

Where does reverberation fit in here? As discussed above, the most important single acoustical factor in the room's design was a shorter reverberation time than a typical concert hall, to account for jazz's presumed propensity for transient sounds. Recall that Marsalis's assertion that "the biggest thing was to make sure the tail is not too long—but that there *is* a tail." While aligning with acoustical common sense by espousing a "not too long" reverberation time, Marsalis tempers this desire by resisting the "really dry" aesthetic more typical of a jazz club, thus revealing at least two unexpected assertions: (1) he doesn't want *his* jazz band to sound like it's in a club—or, as he told me elsewhere—"jazz doesn't have to be played in a smoky basement,"[106] and (2) Rose Theater should, because it's a "big" concert hall, exhibit a degree of allegiance to concert hall expectations through some "volume" and "liveness." Indeed, though Marsalis has been firm in stating that this room would be made "for us" rather than classical music, a good deal of his inspiration came from the classical world. As Derek Gordon, one-time executive director of JALC, told an interviewer, "The hall is based on Wynton's thoughts about European houses and their golden sound."[107] Marsalis was even more specific in an interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, asserting his desire for "the type of golden sound that orchestras have in the best concert halls," while bemoaning the downsides of the corresponding reverb "tail."[108]

By repudiating jazz club aesthetics while partially aligning with the classical concert hall, Marsalis says much about the proper "place" of jazz. Rejecting the dryness of a club while opting for a modified sonic-symbolic grandiosity of a classical concert hall, Marsalis deploys acoustic concepts to mediate his particular version of the ideology of jazz as art. He has long critiqued the "romance" of the "smoky jazz club" as a debilitating stereotype that has, along with racialized tropes of Black musicians as unstudied and vice prone, restricted jazz and jazz musicians' access to the loftier spaces of the art world.[109] Having "emancipate[d] jazz from the basements of the American imaginary,"[110] not only have Marsalis and JALC constructed a physical space that looks and feels like a classical hall—one sanctioned by a revered "European" cultural institution (Lincoln Center)—but one that shares important sonic characteristics with such a hall.

In the end, Rose Theater's acoustics lie at an uneasy balancing point between a variety of approaches to acoustical sound. As it turns out, then, the acoustic aesthetic "etched into"[111] the Rose Theater is not so much a revolutionary or transgressive assault on the classical concert hall tradition—indeed, it was never meant to be—but a jazz-specific "riff" on that tradition. Which isn't to say that Rose Theater is just a classical hall or opera house by another name. For though JALC didn't create a room *exclusively* for jazz, in many meaningful ways the room *was* indeed made specifically, and quite *sincerely*, for jazz—ways that reflect the particularistic ways that JALC leadership defines the music and its meaning. JALC nonetheless enrolls many aspects of classical acoustics, and its aura of universalism, into its overarching art-world mission of establishing jazz at the heart of the US's problematic cultural hierarchy. By listening closely to this room, we thus find that the act of defining and debating the ontology of jazz is not only a contest of words, or even music, but also a matter of sound in its most material form.

## Notes

1. These words, or close paraphrases of them, are reproduced in many journalistic accounts, e.g., Ben Ratliff, "A Hall With Jazz on Its Mind; Basing a Season On Performers And New Works," *New York Times*, May 12, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/12/arts/a-hall-with-jazz-on-its-mind-basing-a-season-on-performers-and-new-works.html; Jazz at Lincoln Center, "The 'Sound of Jazz' Team: Realizing the Jazz at Lincoln Center Vision for Frederick P. Rose Hall," press release, January 8, 2004; Damian Doria, "Going with a Swing," *Auditoria*, January 2005; Jon Pareles, "For the Coolest Vibes: Accentuate Acoustics, Eliminate City Noise," *New York Times*, May 12, 2004. Such language is also found in press releases and on the websites of the principal firms in the Sound of Jazz team; see, e.g., Walters-Storyk Design Group, "Jazz at Lincoln Center," WSDG, accessed September 30, 2021, https://wsdg.com/projects-items/jazz-at-lincoln-center; Rafael Viñoly Architects, "Jazz at Lincoln Center," April 2016.
2. See, e.g., Bill Milkowski, "Wynton Marsalis: One Future, Two Views," *Jazz Times*, 2000; see also Wynton Marsalis, "What Jazz Is—and Isn't," *New York Times*, July 31, 1988. On JALC's relation to non-US contexts, see Jairo Moreno, "Imperial Aurality: Jazz, the Archive, and U.S. Empire," in *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, ed. Ronald Michael Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 135–160; Mark Laver, "Freedom of Choice: Jazz, Neoliberalism, and the Lincoln Center," *Popular Music and Society* 37, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 538–556.
3. Kimberly Hannon Teal, *Jazz Places: How Performance Spaces Shape Jazz History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021). Other recent work on the intersection of jazz and place, and specifically jazz venues, includes Andrew S. Berish, *Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams: Place, Mobility, and Race in Jazz of the 1930s and '40s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Andrew S. Berish, "Space and Place in Jazz," in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, ed. Nicholas Gebhardt, Nichole Rustin-Paschal, and Tony Whyton (Routledge, 2018), 153–162; Patrick Lawrence Burke, *Come In and Hear the Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Teófilo Espada-Brignoni, "The Lives of a Nightclub: Space, Jazz, and Self in Live at the Village Vanguard," *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 456–469. On the power of African American improvisation to produce alternative spatialities that assert Black humanity in the face of centuries of erasure, see James Gordon Williams, *Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021).
4. Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 79.
5. Mark Jacobson, "Wynton Center," *New York Magazine*, December 24, 2001, https://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/music/features/5527.

6. Personal interview, April 13, 2019.

7. In Jacobson, "Wynton Center."

8. Thomas H. Greenland, *Jazzing: New York City's Unseen Scene* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 70.

9. Isabel Vincent, "New York City's Biggest Cultural Organizations among Recipients of Millions in Federal PPP Loans," *New York Post*, July 25, 2020, https://nypost.com/2020/07/25/nycs-richest-cultural-institutions-got-federal-covid-19-bailouts-records.

10. Herman Gray, *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

11. George Lipsitz, "Songs of the Unsung: The Darby Hicks History of Jazz," in *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 23.

12. Though the exclusionary spirit of the discourse of "real jazz" is sometimes only implied—and sometimes literally denied—Marsalis has used and defended the term and its attendant implications on many occasions. See, e.g., Ted Panken, "Wynton Marsalis: Interview by Ted Panken," April 14, 1997, https://wyntonmarsalis.org/news/entry/wynton-marsalis-interview-by-ted-panken; Tony Scherman, "What Is Jazz?," *American Heritage* 46, no. 6 (1995): 66–68; Wynton Marsalis and Frank Stewart, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1994); cf. Stanley Crouch, "Standard Time, Vol. 3—The Resolution of Romance," liner notes for Wynton Marsalis, *Standard Time, Vol. 3—The Resolution of Romance*, May 15, 1990, CBS 466871 2.

13. Especially important texts representing this general mission include Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); Albert Murray, *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture* (New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970); Wynton Marsalis, "Why We Must Preserve Our Jazz Heritage," *Ebony*, February 1, 1986; Marsalis, "What Jazz Is"; Marsalis and Stewart, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*. Illustrative interviews include Scherman, "What Is Jazz?"; Lynn Norment, "Wynton Marsalis: America's Most Powerful Jazz Artist Talks about His Latest Work and Lashes White Critics and Gangsta Rap," *Ebony* 49, no. 9 (July 1994): 45–46, 48, 50.

14. See, e.g., Jazz at Lincoln Center, "Let Freedom Swing," accessed December 13, 2021, https://www.jazz.org/let-freedom-swing. For discussions of efforts by JALC and others to mobilize the democracy/jazz connection, see William J. Maxwell, "Ralph Ellison and the Constitution of Jazzocracy," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 2004): 40–57; Ingrid T. Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Richard Jankowsky, "The Medium Is the Message? Jazz Diplomacy and the Democratic Imagination," in *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 258–288; Murray, *Stomping the Blues*; Andrew Sanchirico, "The Culturally Conservative View of Jazz in America: A Historical and Critical Analysis," *Jazz Perspectives* 9, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 289–311; Benjamin Givan, "How Democratic Is Jazz?," in *Finding Democracy in Music*, ed. Robert Adlington and Esteban Buch (London: Routledge, 2021), 58–79; Tracy McMullen, "Identity for Sale: Glenn Miller, Wynton Marsalis, and Cultural Replay in Music," in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, ed. Nichole Rustin-Paschal and Sherrie Tucker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 129–154; Theodore Gracyk, "Jazz After Jazz: Ken Burns and the Construction of Jazz History," *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 173–187; Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

15. Ajay Heble and Rob Wallace, "Introduction 'People Get Ready': The Future of Jazz Is Now!," in *People Get Ready* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 13; see also Imamu Amiri Baraka, *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Broecking 1995 quoted in George E. Lewis, "Experimental Music in Black and White: The AACM in New York, 1970–1985,"

in *Uptown Conversation*, ed. Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 50–101.

16. Lewis, "Experimental Music in Black and White"; Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ronald Michael Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); McMullen, "Identity for Sale."

17. Leroi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1963); Monson, *Freedom Sounds*; Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz, *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

18. E. Taylor Atkins, ed., *Jazz Planet* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003); Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, eds., *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Travis Jackson, "Culture, Commodity, Palimpsest: Locating Jazz in the World," in *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, ed. Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 381–401; Christopher Washburne, *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

19. Moreno, "Imperial Aurality."

20. Dale Chapman, *The Jazz Bubble: Neoclassical Jazz in Neoliberal Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); Laver, "Freedom of Choice."

21. Nichole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, "Introduction," in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, ed. Nichole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 5; McMullen, "Identity for Sale"; Kimberly Hannon Teal, "Posthumously Live: Canon Formation at Jazz at Lincoln Center through the Case of Mary Lou Williams," *American Music* 32, no. 4 (2014): 400–422; Geoffrey Jacques, "A Roundtable on Ken Burns's Jazz," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13, no. 2 (September 2001): 207–225; cf. Ingrid T. Monson, "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 3 (1995): 396–422; Sherrie Tucker, "When Did Jazz Go Straight? A Queer Question for Jazz Studies," *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études Critiques En Improvisation* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2008); Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

22. Jacobson, "Wynton Center."

23. Emily Ann Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); Leo L. Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture* (New York: Springer, 2004); Roger Schwenke and Steve Ellison, "Objective Assessment of Active Acoustic System Performance," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Room Acoustics* (2010): 4; Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

24. Lewis, "Experimental Music in Black and White," 86.

25. Thomas F. Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," *Theory and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002): 35; cf. Kim Dovey, *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power* (London: Routledge, 2010).

26. Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 42.

27. This convention is most definitively stated in Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses*. Some acousticians use fifty milliseconds as the definition; see Damian Doria, personal interview, April 8, 2019.

28. John Uhl, personal interview, January 20, 2017.

29. Doug Hosney, personal interview, December 19, 2016.

30. Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity*.
31. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
32. See, e.g., Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses*; Blesser and Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*
33. Jazz at Lincoln Center, “The ‘Sound of Jazz’ Team.”
34. These terms appear commonly in my interview transcripts and press accounts. See, e.g., Jazz at Lincoln Center, “The ‘Sound of Jazz’ Team”; Alan G. Artner, “Unsound Design,” *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 2002, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2002-12-01-0212010410-story.html; Doria, “Going with a Swing”; Phil Gallo, “Rose Hall Has Jazz on Upbeat: Fresh Gotham Landmark Trumpets Music Form,” *Variety*, October 24, 2004; Howard Reich, “Sound Almost Lives up to Its Grand Quarters,” *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 2004; David Hinckley, “The House of Swing: Jazz at Lincoln Center Moves into New Digs,” *New York Daily News*, October 12, 2004, https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/house-swing-jazz-at-lincoln-center-moves-into-new/docview/305929982/se-2. See also Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019; Damian Doria, personal interview, April 4, 2019; Chris Darland, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Sam Berkow, personal interview, February 26, 2019; Rob Gibson, personal interview, May 6, 2019; David Robinson, personal interview, April 16, 2018; David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
35. Chris Darland, personal interview, March 20, 2019.
36. David Robinson, personal interview, April 16, 2018.
37. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.
38. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.
39. Schwenke and Ellison, “Objective Assessment,” 1.
40. *New York Times* critic Ben Ratliff described JALC’s earlier homes, the classical halls at Lincoln Center’s main campus, as “respectable cultural landmarks that are nevertheless *physically hostile to the sound of jazz percussion*.” Ratliff, “A Hall With Jazz on Its Mind.”
41. Speech is an even more archetypal case: because of issues of semantic intelligibility, it is considered best with the least reverberation possible.
42. Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses*, 4.
43. Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, “Ancient Acoustic Spaces,” in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (London: Routledge, 2012), 186–196; Richard Cullen Rath, “No Corner for the Devil to Hide,” in *The Sound Studies Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 130–140. Though there have been extensive analyses of the suitability of various RTs for certain musical performance styles, no serious consideration has related to jazz, a fact illustrating the music’s estrangement from the art worlds frequented by professional acousticians and endowed with tailor-made halls. See Schwenke and Ellison “Objective Assessment”; Tom Wetmore and Steve Ellison, “Active Acoustics at the Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center,” *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 142, no. 4 (October 2017): 2530. The most well-known of the classical-oriented inquiries is Leo Beranek’s *Concert Halls and Opera Houses*, which surveys a wide range of authorities to settle on an ideal of 2 seconds for orchestral music and 1.2 seconds for chamber music. See also J. Christopher Jaffe, *The Acoustics of Performance Halls* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010). Social theory perspectives include Thompson, *The Soundscape of Modernity*; Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound*; Darryl Cressman, *Building Musical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Amsterdam: The Concertgebouw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016); Darryl Cressman, “Acoustic Architecture before Science,” *Sound Effects* 5, no. 1 (2015): 14.
44. Quoted in Pareles, “For the Coolest Vibes.”

45. Personal interview, April 13, 2019.

46. See Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Chris Darland, personal interview, March 20, 2019.

47. See, e.g., Bob McCarthy personal interview, December 13, 2018; Damian Doria, personal interview, April 8, 2019; Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Chris Darland, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Sam Berkow, personal interview, February 26, 2019. Incidentally, I got the sense that, to Marsalis's taste, the low-reverberation assumption may have gone too far; he told me at one point, for instance, that "all the rooms were too dry" (personal interview, April 13, 2019).

48. Bohlman and Plastino, *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, 1.

49. Ingrid T. Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Travis Jackson, *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Kathy J. Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Greenland, *Jazzing*.

50. Personal interview, March 20, 2019.

51. Monson, *Saying Something*.

52. Jackson, *Blowin' the Blues Away*; Jackson, "Culture, Commodity, Palimpsest"; Samuel A. Floyd, *The Power of Black Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); cf. Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Olly Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music," in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, ed. Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd (Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 327–338.

53. Damian Doria, personal interview, April 4, 2019.

54. See, e.g., Floyd, *The Power of Black Music*; Dena J. Polacheck Epstein, *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal."

55. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 32.

56. Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 237.

57. Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019; Chris Darland, personal interview, March 20, 2019.

58. Leo Beranek calls this an increased "clarity" or "definition," which in his vocabulary—followed diligently by most acousticians and textbooks—are materially synonymous. Beranek, *Concert Halls and Opera Houses*.

59. Soft goods include banners, curtains, and other fabric items that can be hung from the theater's fly system and elsewhere. They are used for many reasons, including absorbing sound.

60. Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019.

61. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.

62. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.

63. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.

64. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.

65. Marsalis and Stewart, *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*.

66. Sadly, Tyner played only a brief sound check before opting not to perform in the public concert. It would have been Tyner's last public performance. He passed away in March 2020.
67. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
68. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
69. Ed Arenius, personal interview, March 20, 2019.
70. John Uhl, personal interview, March 20, 2019.
71. See Ronald Lewcock et al., *Acoustics*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
72. Personal interview, April 4, 2019.
73. Master carpenter is the designation of the head of the carpentry department. There are three stage technician departments: carpentry, electrics/lighting, and audio/sound/video. The "head" of the second department is known as "master electrician," while the audio department head is the "head sound engineer."
74. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
75. David Gibson, personal communication, March 29, 2019.
76. Doug Hosney, personal interview, December 19, 2016.
77. The crew also did everything they could to "deaden" the room, a topic that allows me to discuss another aspect of the theater: variable acoustics. David Gibson said it was "super maxed out" with absorption (personal interview, March 29, 2019).
78. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
79. David Gibson, personal communication, March 29, 2019.
80. David Gibson, personal communication, March 29, 2019.
81. Put simply, a master compressor lowers—or "compresses"—the sound amplitude during moments when it rises above a desired threshold. When effectively applied, compressors can "smooth" out any number of variations between musical/sonic materials—sometimes described as increasing the "blend."
82. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 23.
83. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 28.
84. Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); see also Whitney Jesse Slaten, "Doing Sound: An Ethnography of Fidelity, Temporality, and Labor Among Live Sound Engineers" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2018); Emily Ann Thompson, "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877–1925," *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1995): 131–171; Marc Perlman, "Golden Ears and Meter Readers: The Contest for Epistemic Authority in Audiophilia," *Social Studies of Science* 34, no. 5 (2004): 783–807; Georgina Born, "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity," *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 7–36; cf. Fredric Jameson, "The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber," *New German Critique*, no. 1 (1973): 52–89.
85. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 39; cf. Born, "On Musical Mediation."
86. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 128.
87. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 79.
88. Personal interview, April 13, 2019.
89. See, e.g., Marsalis, "What Jazz Is."
90. Milkowski, "Wynton Marsalis."

91. Milkowski, "Wynton Marsalis."
92. Jacobson, "Wynton Center."
93. Ingrid T. Monson, "Jazz Improvisation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and David Horn (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 131.
94. Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 35.
95. Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 42.
96. David Gibson, personal interview, April 4, 2019.
97. Doug Hosney, personal interview, December 19, 2016.
98. Bob McCarthy, personal communication, December 13, 2018.
99. Doug Hosney, personal interview, December 19, 2016.
100. See Monson, *Saying Something*; Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*; Jackson, *Blowin' the Blues Away*; Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution*; Greenland, *Jazzing*; Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal."
101. Marsalis in Scherman, "What Is Jazz?"
102. Wilson, "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal," 329.
103. Travis Jackson, "Jazz as Musical Practice," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. Mervyn Cooke and David Horn (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 89.
104. Monson, *Saying Something*, 136.
105. Marsalis, "What Jazz Is."
106. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.
107. Gallo, "Rose Hall."
108. Howard Reich, "Unsound Design," *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 2002.
109. Wynton Marsalis, personal interview, April 13, 2019.
110. Laver, "Freedom of Choice," 552.
111. Gieryn, "What Buildings Do," 42.

## Works Cited

Artner, Alan G. "Unsound Design." *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 2002. https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2002-12-01-0212010410-story.html.

Atkins, E. Taylor, ed. *Jazz Planet*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003.

Baraka, Imamu Amiri. *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Beranek, Leo L. *Concert Halls and Opera Houses: Music, Acoustics, and Architecture*. New York: Springer, 2004.

Berish, Andrew S. *Lonesome Roads and Streets of Dreams: Place, Mobility, and Race in Jazz of the 1930s and '40s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

———. "Space and Place in Jazz." In *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, edited by Nicholas Gebhardt, Nichole Rustin-Paschal, and Tony Whyton, 153–162. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Blesser, Barry, and Linda-Ruth Salter. "Ancient Acoustic Spaces." In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 186–196. London: Routledge, 2012.

———. *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

Bohlman, Philip V., and Goffredo Plastino. "Introduction." In *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, 1–48. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Born, Georgina. "On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology and Creativity." *Twentieth-Century Music* 2, no. 1 (2005): 7–36.

Burke, Patrick Lawrence. *Come In and Hear the Truth: Jazz and Race on 52nd Street*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008.

Chapman, Dale. *The Jazz Bubble: Neoclassical Jazz in Neoliberal Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018.

Cressman, Darryl. "Acoustic Architecture before Science." *Sound Effects* 5, no. 1 (2015): 10–23.

———. *Building Musical Culture in Nineteenth-Century Amsterdam: The Concertgebouw*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

Crouch, Stanley. "Standard Time, Vol. 3—The Resolution of Romance." Liner notes for Marsalis, Wynton. *Standard Time, Vol 3—The Resolution of Romance*. May 15, 1990. CBS 466871 2.

Doria, Damian. "Going with a Swing." *Auditoria*, January 2005.

Dovey, Kim. *Becoming Places: Urbanism/Architecture/Identity/Power*. London: Routledge, 2010.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *Sensing Sound: Singing & Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Epstein, Dena J. Polacheck. *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

Espada-Brignoni, Teófilo. "The Lives of a Nightclub: Space, Jazz, and Self in Live at the Village Vanguard." *Popular Music and Society* 42, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 456–469.

Fischlin, Daniel, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Improvisation, Rights, and the Ethics of Cocreation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Floyd, Samuel A. *The Power of Black Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Fosler-Lussier, Danielle. *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Gallo, Phil. "Rose Hall Has Jazz on Upbeat: Fresh Gotham Landmark Trumpets Music Form." *Variety*, October 24, 2004.

Gates, Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Gieryn, Thomas F. "What Buildings Do." *Theory and Society* 31, no. 1 (2002): 35–74.

Givan, Benjamin. "How Democratic Is Jazz?" In *Finding Democracy in Music*, edited by Robert Adlington and Esteban Buch, 58–79. London: Routledge, 2021.

Goehr, Lydia. *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Gracyk, Theodore. "Jazz After Jazz: Ken Burns and the Construction of Jazz History." *Philosophy and Literature* 26, no. 1 (2002): 173–187.

Gray, Herman. *Cultural Moves: African Americans and the Politics of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

Greenland, Thomas H. *Jazzing: New York City's Unseen Scene*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016.

Heble, Ajay, and Rob Wallace. "Introduction 'People Get Ready': The Future of Jazz Is Now!" In *People Get Ready*, 1–28. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.

Hinckley, David. "The House of Swing: Jazz at Lincoln Center Moves into New Digs." *New York Daily News*, October 12, 2004. https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/house-swing-jazz-at-lincoln-center-moves-into-new/docview/305929982/se-2.

Jackson, Travis. *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

———. "Culture, Commodity, Palimpsest: Locating Jazz in the World." In *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, 381–401. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

———. "Jazz as Musical Practice." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, 81–95. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Jacobson, Mark. "Wynton Center." *New York Magazine*, December 24, 2001. https://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/music/features/5527.

Jacques, Geoffrey. "A Roundtable on Ken Burns's Jazz." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13, no. 2 (September 2001): 207–225.

Jaffe, J. Christopher. *The Acoustics of Performance Halls*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2010.

Jameson, Fredric. "The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber." *New German Critique*, no. 1 (1973): 52–89.

Jankowsky, Richard. "The Medium Is the Message? Jazz Diplomacy and the Democratic Imagination." In *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, 258–288. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Jazz at Lincoln Center. "Let Freedom Swing." Accessed December 13, 2021. https://www.jazz.org/let-freedom-swing.

———. "The 'Sound of Jazz' Team: Realizing the Jazz at Lincoln Center Vision for Frederick P. Rose Hall," January 8, 2004. Press release.

Jones, Leroi. *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1963.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Laver, Mark. "Freedom of Choice: Jazz, Neoliberalism, and the Lincoln Center." *Popular Music and Society* 37, no. 5 (October 20, 2014): 538–556.

Lewcock, Ronald, Rijn Pirn, Jürgen Meyer, Carleen M. Hutchins, J. Woodhouse, John C. Schelleng, Bernard Richardson, et al. *Acoustics*. Vol. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Lewis, George E. "Experimental Music in Black and White: The AACM in New York, 1970–1985." In *Uptown Conversation*, edited by Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, 50–101. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Lipsitz, George. "Songs of the Unsung: The Darby Hicks History of Jazz." In *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*, edited by Robert G. O'Meally, Brent Hayes Edwards, and Farah Jasmine Griffin, 9–26. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Marsalis, Wynton. "What Jazz Is—and Isn't." *New York Times*, July 31, 1988.

———. "Why We Must Preserve Our Jazz Heritage." *Ebony*, February 1, 1986.

Marsalis, Wynton, and Frank Stewart. *Sweet Swing Blues on the Road*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1994.

Maxwell, William J. "Ralph Ellison and the Constitution of Jazzocracy." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 16, no. 1 (April 2004): 40–57.

McMullen, Tracy. "Identity for Sale: Glenn Miller, Wynton Marsalis, and Cultural Replay in Music." In *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, edited by Nichole Rustin-Paschal and Sherrie Tucker, 129–154. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Milkowski, Bill. "Wynton Marsalis: One Future, Two Views." *Jazz Times*, 2000.

Monson, Ingrid T. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

———. "Jazz Improvisation." In *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, edited by Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, 114–132. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

———. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

———. "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, no. 3 (1995): 396–422.

Moreno, Jairo. "Imperial Aurality: Jazz, the Archive, and U.S. Empire." In *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, edited by Ronald Michael Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, 135–160. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016.

Murray, Albert. *The Omni-Americans: New Perspectives on Black Experience and American Culture*. New York: Outerbridge & Dienstfrey, 1970.

———. *Stomping the Blues*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976.

Norment, Lynn. "Wynton Marsalis: America's Most Powerful Jazz Artist Talks about His Latest Work and Lashes White Critics and Gangsta Rap." *Ebony* 49, no. 9 (July 1994): 45–46, 48, 50.

Ogren, Kathy J. *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Panken, Ted. "Wynton Marsalis: Interview by Ted Panken," April 14, 1997. https://wyntonmarsalis.org/news/entry/wynton-marsalis-interview-by-ted-panken.

Pareles, Jon. "For the Coolest Vibes: Accentuate Acoustics, Eliminate City Noise." *New York Times*, May 12, 2004.

Perlman, Marc. "Golden Ears and Meter Readers: The Contest for Epistemic Authority in Audiophilia." *Social Studies of Science* 34, no. 5 (2004): 783–807.

Porter, Eric. *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

Radano, Ronald Michael. *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Rafael Viñoly Architects. "Jazz at Lincoln Center," April 2016.

Rath, Richard Cullen. "No Corner for the Devil to Hide." In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 130–140. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Ratliff, Ben. "A Hall With Jazz on Its Mind; Basing a Season On Performers And New Works." *New York Times*, May 12, 2004. https://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/12/arts/a-hall-with-jazz-on-its-mind-basing-a-season-on-performers-and-new-works.html.

Reich, Howard. "Sound Almost Lives up to Its Grand Quarters." *Chicago Tribune*, October 24, 2004.

———. "Unsound Design." *Chicago Tribune*, December 1, 2002.

Rustin, Nichole, and Sherrie Tucker. "Introduction." In *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, edited by Nichole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, 1–28. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Sanchirico, Andrew. "The Culturally Conservative View of Jazz in America: A Historical and Critical Analysis." *Jazz Perspectives* 9, no. 3 (September 2, 2015): 289–311.

Scherman, Tony. "What Is Jazz?" *American Heritage* 46, no. 6 (1995): 66–68.

Schwenke, Roger, and Steve Ellison. "Objective Assessment of Active Acoustic System Performance," *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Room Acoustics* 2010: 4.

Slaten, Whitney Jesse. "Doing Sound: An Ethnography of Fidelity, Temporality, and Labor Among Live Sound Engineers." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2018.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

Teal, Kimberly Hannon. *Jazz Places: How Performance Spaces Shape Jazz History*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021.

———. "Posthumously Live: Canon Formation at Jazz at Lincoln Center through the Case of Mary Lou Williams." *American Music* 32, no. 4 (2014): 400–422.

Thompson, Emily Ann. "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877–1925." *The Musical Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (1995): 131–171.

———. *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900–1933*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002.

Tucker, Sherrie. *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.

———. "When Did Jazz Go Straight? A Queer Question for Jazz Studies." *Critical Studies in Improvisation / Études Critiques En Improvisation* 4, no. 2 (December 1, 2008).

Vincent, Isabel. "New York City's Biggest Cultural Organizations among Recipients of Millions in Federal PPP Loans." *New York Post*, July 25, 2020. https://nypost.com/2020/07/25/nycs-richest-cultural-institutions-got-federal-covid-19-bailouts-records.

Walters-Storyk Design Group. "Jazz at Lincoln Center." WSDG. Accessed September 30, 2021. https://wsdg.com/projects-items/jazz-at-lincoln-center.

Washburne, Christopher. *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.

Wetmore, Tom, and Steve Ellison. "Active Acoustics at the Appel Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center." *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America* 142, no. 4 (October 2017): 2530.

Williams, James Gordon. *Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021.

Wilson, Olly. "The Heterogeneous Sound Ideal in African-American Music." In *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, edited by Josephine Wright and Samuel A. Floyd, 327–338. Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992.

# !We Are Not Jazz¡ Liminal Jazz in the Music of La Distritofónica, Bogotá, Colombia

*Diego Alberto Gómez Nieto*

## *Abstract*

*The present article examines the problem that arises in the relationship between jazz, experimental music, and sense of place. Considering the music of La Distritofónica, a musical collective from Bogotá, Colombia, I discuss hegemonic definitions of jazz that conceive the problem of music ontology from an aural perspective. These definitions, which relate La Distritofónica to the sphere of free jazz, become insufficient to define the complexity of the phenomena, translating the question to the relations between jazz and place. From this point of view, the case of La Distritofónica exemplifies an intrinsic link between a particular ontology of jazz and Latin American experimental music, which leads me to see La Distritofónica as a metaphor of the soundscape of the city of Bogotá that critiques the political and sonic circumstances of this particular place but still situates the phenomena as a liminal and abject one in the jazz-experimental binary.*

*I argue that it is in the intersubjective communicative condition of free improvisation that an ontology can be located that explains the music of La Distritofónica in relation to Bogotá, allowing me to decenter the notions of a "work of art" or "standard" as the dominant conceptualization of jazz music. Instead, La Distritofónica allows us to rethink the ancillary circumstance of improvisation in jazz. I bring into discussion the nonprescriptive aesthetic of La Distritofónica; the way its music dialogues with other music, bringing them into its artistic discourse; and its liminal status as an "undefinable" object that manifests an aural aspect of the city of Bogota. I discuss the matter in question from the voices of the members of the community and mediatic information that exemplifies the nexus between the*

**Jazz & Culture** Volume 7, Number 1 Spring/Summer 2024
© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

*music of La Distritofónica and Bogotá to explain the metaphor and the breakpoint between ontologies of jazz and experimental music.*

Jazz made in Latin America is a version, not a repetition, of what American musicians make and perform in cities like New York. To understand this point is to understand that artists pursuing jazz outside of the United States conceive it as more than simply a genre of music, but as a way of understanding and being "into" the music. Jazz becomes a kind of *lingua franca*, following Julian Ruesga, around which musicians from all over the world have revolved, but, I insist, it must be understood as a language that has been critically and creatively adapted in each place. With this in mind, this article brings into discussion jazz made in Colombia, which has been observed from different angles. Some treatment of this topic in prior scholarship has been historical and historiographical, focusing on both the history of the music in Colombia and on the configuration of discourses around jazz in educational and cultural fields.[1] Building on this background, this article aims to critically address one of the most relevant phenomena within the genre in the last twenty years. I refer to the case of the music collective known as La Distritofónica.

The article will be divided into five sections. In the first part, I will describe the musical phenomenon that is La Distritofónica, presenting the aesthetic intention of the project and its music in a general way. In the second section, I build on this description by raising an ontological problem in jazz studies that questions the differential problem between "works of art" and improvisations. In a third section, I will delve deeper into the subject of improvisation by drawing upon the ideas of philosophers Donald Davidson and Sam McAuliffe, framing the practice as an intersubjective circuit that allows for communication between jazz and experimental music in the city of Bogotá. In a fourth section, I complexify the case by understanding the music of La Distritofónica as a disruptive and abject event from an aural perspective that links the collective with noise, transforming it into a liminal phenomenon. In a final section, I argue that the music of La Distritofónica can be understood as a process of entextualization of Bogota's sonosphere, offering an answer to the question of how the city of Bogotá sounds.

## La Distritofónica: An Indefinable Phenomenon

"Delirium, tropical noise, country metal, South American folklore, noise and experimental jazz" have been some of the eclectic adjectives used in the media to describe the sound of La Distritofónica, a Bogota-based musical collective and record label founded in 2004.[2] According to its mission statement, the collective's goal is to provide "a platform to support the independent music of young Bogotá musicians who take as their aesthetic starting point the traditional languages of the coasts, the interior, and urban music (jazz, rock, electronic, [and] classical) to develop an open and plural language consistent with the guidelines of contemporary musical vanguards."[3]

On the one hand, the collective brings together local and national music traditions with more popular genres such as jazz and rock. Its mission suggests a framework of globalization in line with the concept of multiculturalism, a goal that echoes language inscribed in the 1991 Constitution of the Republic of Colombia. This aspect of the collective's curatorship is evident in the group's logo: a "tunjo" wearing headphones. A tunjo is an anthropomorphic figure of the Muysca indigenous culture of the Cundinamarca and Boyaca regions of the Andes Mountains, where the city of Bogotá is located. While this image connects the group directly to local influences and commitments, it simultaneously speaks of an "open and plural" language from a poiesis subordinated to a particular sphere: that of the contemporary avant-garde.

As will be explained, La Distritofónica is linked to two ontological paradigms: jazz (particularly freer forms of the music) and experimental music (particularly traditions drawn from free improvisation and noise music). With these clarifications, I wish to show that the collective appeals to a condition of the Bogotá music field marked by a tendency to allow classical music and jazz to become the norm for musical understanding.[4] It is from this context, and in response to it, that La Distritofónica emerges: from a jazz anchored in academicism.[5]

It is worth noting the etymology of collective's name, La Distritofónica (district/phonic, or sounds of the district), which invokes the proximity of its artistic production to the city it inhabits: Bogotá, Colombia. Naturally, this characteristic exceeds the collective's name alone, and it is evident in the collection of paratexts and metatexts that link their artistic production with the city (see table 1[6]). What is interesting about this commitment is that such links are generally circumscribed to aesthetic experiences where improvisation (free in the majority of cases) and noise are consubstantial in La Distritofónica. Both are rooted in experiences common to the city's aural sphere, which is further correlated with problems such as sound pollution, traffic noise, and a high urban density, just to mention a few examples.

Thus, I argue, following the work of Daniel Martin Fiege, that the link between jazz and the concept of the "musical work" is unsatisfactory. Tracing the condition of "work" in the artistic-sound phenomena created by La Distritofónica to define its tentative ontological condition as jazz or not is insufficient.[7] Even incorporating normative delimitations of free jazz will prove sterile, simply because the aesthetic decisions that comprise La Distritofónica surpass this kind of nominal and prescriptive description.[8] Rather, I am interested in reviewing (1) the observations that the members themselves make about their artistic productions and that configure an intersubjective experiential network that shares aesthetic aspects with jazz itself and (2) elements of experimental practice that connect to traditions of free improvisation and noise.

TABLE 1: PARATEXTUAL INFORMATION OF DISC TITLES AND TRACKS IN LA DISTRITOFÓNICA.

| Group | Album | Year | Track |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primero mi Tía Quinteto | *Primero mi Tía Quinteto* [First My Aunt Quintet] | 2005 | • "Transmilenio"<br>• "Tra Ico" |
| Ricardo Gallo Cuarteto | *Los Cerros Testigos* [The Hills Witness] | 2005 | • "La Distritofobia" |
| Tumbacatre | *Tumbacatre* | 2006 | • "Candelaria" |
| La Revuelta [The Riot] | *Agua* [Water] | 2007 | • "Rio Bogotá" [Bogotá's River] |
| Ricardo Gallo Cuarteto | *Urdimbres y Marañas* [Warps and Reeds] | 2006 | • "La Distritofobia" |
| Curupira | *Regenera* | 2013 | • "Décima con Jiménez" [10th Street and Jimenez Street]<br>• "Sumergido en la ciudad" [Immersed in the City] |
| Ricardo Gallo Cuarteto | *Tribu de Asfalto* [Asphalt Tribe] | 2013 | • "Tribu de asfalto" |
| Ricardo Gallo Cuarteto | *En Transito* [In Transit] | 2018 | • "En Transito"<br>• "Mikrotráfico" |

Note: Certain titles have not been translated in order to maintain the symbolic power in their original language.

Improvisation is conceived in the West as the exemplary paradigm related to jazz, without being a sine qua non for jazz.[9] This even relates to views that observe the need for dynamism and experimentalism in jazz in order to maintain its relevance as a musical phenomenon.[10] However, beyond relating the discussion to purely nominal aspects, I am interested in linking La Distritofónica's music to intersubjective aspects that inform the artistic creation of the collective itself. The group's output suggests an aesthetic appreciation of the everyday, and particularly to experiences of the city that the members of La Distritofónica inhabit.[11] I argue that these elements constitute an ontology and musical practice, particularly if one understands the concept of improvisation as a metaphor of inhabiting.[12]

## Improvisation as a Structuring Principle

Considering the role of improvisation allows us not only to align ontological links between jazz and experimental music but also to reveal intersubjective conditions that allow the local scene to be configured by musicians who share not only knowledge of jazz and experimental music but also understandings about local space.[13] La Distritofónica can be understood as an intersubjective circuit that is related to the "principle of charity" following the ideas of the philosopher Donald Davidson.[14] This perspective argues that intersubjective understanding is possible as long as the actors share the same belief system—in this case aesthetic beliefs—within the world in which they circulate. In fact, La Distritofónica involves actors from both jazz and experimental scenes. Thus, such interactions result in a sine qua non condition presupposed for understanding that triangulates, from a principle of linguistic familiarity, with the experience of others for a common goal.[15] That goal is the creation of a process-based music,[16] building upon a groundwork of free improvisation.

The analysis below considers the ontological aspect of improvisation—particularly improvisation performed within free jazz, a style often considered as disruptive and contrary to artistic practices that preceded it such as swing and bop.[17] This disruptive aspect of the style can be related to the concept of abjection. As Julia Kristeva writes, "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite."[18] Precisely this "disrespect to the borders" becomes a transgression of a norm that contains an ontology for the musical. As will be explained below, this transgression is related to the concept of noise.

I will begin by recapitulating understandings of improvisation as a concept subordinate to that of composition, a history that dates back to the early nineteenth century.[19] By doing so, I seek to understand that free improvisation is not exclusively an aesthetic framework. Rather, it is a political framework that opposes aural regimes, premeditated traditions, and hegemonic compositional and interpretative stances.[20] To expand this position, I turn toward an ontology of the experimental, situating improvisation in La Distritofónica within traditions of noise music. This perspective is key to understanding improvisation itself, its nexus with the experimental, and its relation to the artistic work of La Distritofónica.

## Improvisation, Experimentalism, Noise, and Abjection in the Jazz Scene of Bogotá

The work of La Distritofónica is best understood within paradigms of experimental music. Experimental music can be understood not as a preestablished and structured language but as an experience in itself.[21] It constitutes a nonprescriptive experience and is, above all, contingent to the context in which it is performed. The collective's connection to this tradition is evident in the fact that several members of La Distritofónica also participate extensively in musical contexts expressly related to the experimental music scene of Bogotá. A number of members, for example, are close friends and frequent collaborators with members of the Colombian Circle of Contemporary Music (CCMC in its Spanish initials).[22] Still others participate in performances, venues, and festivals related to higher education spheres in Bogotá, such as the Universidad de los Andes, the Academia Superior de Música de Bogotá or the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. As just one example, saxophonist María Angélica Valencia—curator of the "Festival Distritofónico" and member of La Distritofónica projects Asdrubal, La Revuelta, and Meridian Brothers—has participated in several experimental projects not directly linked to the collective such as MULA[23] or Mirlitorrinco.[24]

The aesthetics of experimentalist improvisation is something that can only be apprehended in and through each improvisation itself.[25] This fact necessitates conceiving it as process and product at the same time.[26] It cannot be constructed under preexisting conventions, but, rather, each performance constructs its own conventions as a communicative and relational mechanism.[27] It confronts the listener with elements of the unknown and challenges their subjectivity, constituting a particular normativity where the parameter of "the opposite" plays a vital role.[28] This process is itself improvisatory,[29] establishing an important value that undergirds the practice: that communication *itself* is an act of constant improvisation.[30]

In La Distritofónica, an ontology of jazz founded on works and/or standards is implicitly critiqued, namely because free improvisation does not contain within its ontology such a construction of tradition. Rather, the ontology of free improvisation is constituted as a disruptive discourse that is opposed to the treatment that improvisation has in conventional jazz[31] because it is conceived as a transgression of this "standard/work" tradition.[32] It considers the mainstream as a restriction[33] and free improvisation as a phenomenon that is "free to" create, to imagine, and (most importantly) to hear, but it is not "free from" the traditions that preceded it.[34] However, from a purely generative point of view, it is extremely complex to relate the experience of La Distritofónica to a particular tradition in a univocal manner. Indeed, bringing up the bop tradition of the mid-twentieth century and the free response of artists such as Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and John Coltrane will be a natural point of comparison, but it is not sufficient to address to the aesthetic of La Distritofónica.[35] It would further be necessary to bring up the influences that the post-tonal scene drew from dodecaphonic and serial ideas as well as experimental traditions drawn from the ideas of John Cage (including the latter's rhizomatic epistemological conception, neither sequential nor teleological). This implies understanding improvisation as freedom at the level of expression, but not of choice,[36] an expression founded both on Davidson's principle of charity as well as on the experience of everyday life in Bogotá. This means that the mere fact of communication in music implies, according to Davidson, an intersubjective understanding based on the fact that musicians live in a city like Bogotá, where jazz and experimental music are common languages that they understand as modes of expression.

The concept of noise is also concomitant with La Distritofónica's poiesis. I understand noise not as delimited sound but as a "metadiscourse on sound and its social interpretation."[37] Its definition works in a relationship of mutual exclusion against the musical or, better yet, against what is defined as musical in a given culture.[38] In view of this, the word "noise" is a metatext that by reason of its cultural use acquires a phenomenological relationship with some event and/or sound material of negative and/or pejorative (abject) valence. This can be understood alongside other categories such as disorder, chaos, dissonance, distortion, and error, among others. The emancipation of noise as art has been a rather complex journey that directly confronts an artistic practice such as jazz. I can suggest that it is through noise that we are able to intuit the serial relations that link the heterogenetic modes through which everything comes to be in an ontology that does not believe in fixed identities, beings, and transcendent essence but only difference, becomings.[39]

Here appears a fundamental binding point that allows us to find connections between the concepts of improvisation and noise: the notion of process.[40] But by comprehending process as a metaphor that is in constant transformation (both in and outside of spheres of "music," per se),[41] it becomes possible to see beyond La Distritofonica's music alone and to further connect its work to the everyday life of the city itself. Following Kristeva, we can understand that noise is not an "absence of cleanliness" (that is, it is not an absence of normativity) but rather as "that which disturbs an identity, a system and an order," something that does not "respect limits,"[42] and, subsequently, something liminal. Under this argument, I suggest that experimental music constitutes a form of liminality that does not pretend to constitute a new regime and would directly clash with such a possibility.

In the urban context, it is vital to understand the ways that noise has been considered as a concomitant aspect of modern cities.[43] Although there is no clear and concise definition of noise from the ontological point of view, Liu Fangfang et al. refer to it as a combination of sounds that produces an unpleasant, annoying, and undesirable sensation and that can cause damage to the health of people who are exposed to it.[44] The World Health Organization further specifies decibel measurement as a mechanism for identifying so-called noise pollution.[45] In Colombia, there are particular legislations that regulate noise,[46] and it is an ongoing problem within Bogotá, especially in downtown areas.

The activities of La Distritofónica are centered around specific areas of the city, particularly the neighborhoods of Chapinero and Teusaquillo. These are the neighborhoods both where the majority of the members of La Distritofonica live and also where they most frequently present their music (through concerts, improvisation sessions, and so on). Some of the most prominent venues in these areas include matik-matik, Charlotte, and Acto latino. These venues have established themselves as crucial meeting places for the Distritofónica community over the last twenty years, to the point where artists sometimes refer to them metaphorically as "their home."

To bring up these localities is to point out a particular Bogotá. One where, according to Ramirez and Dominguez, there is a "severe problem of noise pollution in the main roads" due, among other factors, to a "historical absence of an efficient and massive public transportation system."[47] As can be deduced, issues surrounding transportation are a daily experience of the inhabitants of Bogotá and a frequent source of aural inspiration for the projects of La Distritofónica. As detailed in table 1, much of the paratextual information connecting its music to the city is related to themes of traffic and transportation. These expressions are never far removed from the chaos, irrationality, violence, and abject and liminal processes of listening to the city's noisy soundscape. For this reason, I argue that members of La Distritofónica share not only aesthetic ideologies but also aesthetic commitments that are directly linked to the city of Bogotá. And here I refer to aesthetics in its literal sense; that is, aesthesis as experience and consequently as a discipline that describes the experience itself.

Two examples from the collective's output serve as strong examples of the relationships between noise, improvisation, and urban space. As part of a documentary about the quintet Primero mi tía—one of the collective's germinal projects—drummer Jorge Sepúlveda points out that the group performs "a new way of interpreting currulao," a genre originally from the Colombian Pacific coast. The group fuses this style with a "strong influence of jazz language" with many influences of "Coltrane and Coleman," creating what Sepúlveda describes as (and here is the emphasis) "a very *Bogotá sound*."[48] It is precisely this "bogotánidad" that is crucial to understanding the collective's larger goals.

A second example is related to the recordings of the Ricardo Gallo quartet. Paratextual references to the city are evident dating from the group's very first production *Los Cerros Testigos* (The Hills Witness) from 2005. In Gallo's words, the album is "dedicated to my city Bogotá, which has been my stimulus, my origin and the *place of my reunion*."[49] The creation is further influenced by the daily aesthetic experience of its members in the city of Bogotá. This is also evident in the opinions of the drummer Jorge Sepúlveda who emphasizes that "we are children of a Bogotá, because it seems to me that the city has a lot to do [with our music. It is] chaotic, full of smog, noise, chaos, and other things too (. . .) our music. If you abstract from being the one who plays it, and just listen to it, it sounds like Bogotá, because that is where we grew up."[50] Following this opinion, I also quote bassist Juan Manuel Toro who, referring to Gallo, says that his creative practice shows a relationship with Bogotá as "an aggressive and noisy modern city."[51]

As it has been suggested, an ontology of jazz thought from intersubjectivity allows us to understand the way in which in La Distritofónica there are dialogues that, from the same aesthetic language, can generate a variety of projects. Part of the understanding of this ontological condition is directly linked to an intersubjective experience resulting from the aesthesis that the members of the collective have lived in the city of Bogota. In order to understand this relationship between the aesthesis of the everyday and the artistic production of La Distritofónica, I use the concept of metaphor to explain these connections.

## La Distritofónica as a Metaphor of a Chaotic City

In order to understand the relationship between music and metaphor, it is necessary to understand that there is no constitutive aspect in music that intrinsically links the sound itself to some kind of extramusical experience. This is why expressivity in music results "not an attribute of the work as such but is simply attributed to the work."[52] In this sense, I understand metaphor as a basic structure for understanding the musical, which allows us to avoid assuming, creating, or generating any kind of immediate relationship between sound and language.[53] This raises the problem of signification in relation to experience itself, in this case aural experience. Thus, we can agree with Lawrence Zbikowski "that meaning is grounded in embodied experience."[54] In the case of the members of La Distritofónica, this "embodied experience" is related to an aural experience of the city of Bogotá.[55]

The use of the concept of metaphor and its relation with a cultural (and aural) practice allows us to correlate characteristic words of musical terminology with sonorous aspects of La Distritofónica's music to explain a domain that I call "Bogotá sound." This, in turn, helps to understand links between the music and the city as a "metaphor for the experience of the modern world."[56] This model generates a synergy between the experience of the everyday by members of La Distritofónica and their subsequent artistic production.

Following the idea of La Distritofonica's music as a metaphor for Bogotá, the purpose of this research is not to correlate characteristic aspects of the geography of music in the city in order to create cartographies[57] nor to reveal aspects of identity.[58] Rather, from an analysis centered on listening,[59] I suggest that La Distritofónica seeks to promote an understanding of the aural experience of the city of Bogotá as experienced via sound, social life, and everyday dynamics. This phenomenological/sensorial turn in the social sciences has allowed the urban to be rethought not from arbitrary ideological aspects (civility, modernity, etc.) but from the importance of the corporal and the way in which a territory is inhabited from corporeality—or from listening. In this sense, the music city of La Distritofónica is conceived from processes of improvisation-noise within the music, understood in conjunction with its artistic production within Bogotá. This process moves beyond being "resistance toward the dominant ideals of music, and consequently, of the larger society,"[60] and instead becomes a metaphor that operates as what Ana María Ochoa-Gautier understands as entextualization and transduction of the particular sonority of Bogotá.[61]

## Aurality and the Metaphor as a Node: How Does Bogotá Sound?

As key concepts to trace and characterize a normativity that regulated the uses of Spanish in nineteenth-century Colombia, Ochoa-Gautier introduces two concepts that she refers to as entextualization and transduction. Entextualization is defined as "the act of framing the musical object to be studied through multiple modes of 'capturing' it."[62] I relate entextualization to the mechanism of creation-improvisation in La Distritofónica to broaden the understanding of its artistic endeavor: the link between an experience located at an intersubjective level in the city of Bogotá and its sound-musical discourse as an urban metaphor. In other words, an acoustic source (in this case the sonosphere of Bogotá) is mediated by the aesthesis ("Distritofónica" we could say) of some particular subjects (members of the collective) and entextualized in music. Furthermore, the notion of transduction, understood as "the transformation of one form of matter or energy (sound waves, light) into another (vibrations, biochemical transmitters, etc.)," is adapted in order to understand the "intercultural context of mutual encounters of alterities,"[63] an idea Ochoa-Gautier draws from the ideas of anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro.[64] The music of La Distritofónica is thereby understood as a transduction of the acoustic components of Bogotá's sonosphere, which is then entextualized using the semantic aspects linking jazz, improvisation, and experimental music as nodes for pragmatic possibility and poiesis.

This series of aspects leads to understanding the music of La Distritofónica as a political activity. This political aspect is evident when considering cultural policies that regulate the musical development of the city, such as those from the Instituto Distrital de las Artes de Bogotá (Idartes), among other entities. To demonstrate this point, I highlight a characteristic example that demonstrates the types of cultural critique embedded in La Distritofónica's work.

One major event sponsored by Idartes is the Bogota International Classical Music Festival (Festival Internacional de Música Clásica de Bogotá), which has been held since 2013. Each edition of the festival has carried a subtitle linking the city with specific composers and/or canonical traditions of European art music: "Bogotá Is Beethoven" (2013), "Bogotá Is Mozart" (2015), "Bogotá Is Romantic Russia" (2017), "Bogotá Is Brahms, Schubert and Schumann" (2019), "Bogotá Is Baroque: Bach, Handel, Vivaldi" (2021), and "Bogotá is France: La Belle Epoque" (2023). These subtitles suggest a univocal relationship with classist and elitist overtones. The comparison between city and music has been criticized not only by members of La Distritofónica but also by members of other groups such as the CCMC.[65] The subtitles refer to problematic constructions of "purified listenings"[66] that effectively derive from conceptions that are unrelated and decontextualized from their place of emergence. That is, the conception of music as an autonomous and pure art represents an imaginary, unreal, paradoxical, and contradictory proposition to those who face the aural experience of Bogotá every day. Bogotá is not Mozart, and the political proposal of La Distritofónica is geared toward critiquing this perspective both by developing new ontologies of experimental performances and by linking those ontologies to the city itself.

Such efforts can be seen especially clearly in the curatorial mission pursued by the Festival Distritofónico, a music festival produced by the group. According to

Alejandro Forero, a founding member of the collective, the festival seeks "musics that are experimenting, that come up with interesting products or that in the end we like"[67] in a way that presents itself as an objection or disobedience to the classical festival's prescription of what "Bogotá is." This is evident even in the series of responses that La Distritofónica has received—some of them pejorative and negative—from certain cultural sectors. The curator of the festival, Maria Angélica Valencia, emphasizes the choices made to create a festival that transcends genres:

> To break the mindset of a genre-bound festival is an idea of the festival—that's why it is called distritofónico. And although many people say: "These people make a lot of noise," they have not gone into detail or listened to all the proposals that are in La Distritofónica. There are things that are pure noise, but also traditional music; there are things that are pop and rock; there are jazz things; there is a bit of everything.[68]

This type of opinion reveals an apparent and irreconcilable relationship between public cultural policy and particular initiatives that fall into abjection and liminality for not falling in line with the ontologies and listeners that make up such policies. This is emphasized by opinions expressed in certain Bogotan magazines that reviewed the festival and its relation to the soundscape of the city. Andrés Gualdron in *Vice* magazine writes: "Ten years ago, when the musical collective La Distritofónica was born, I had the impression that I was finally listening to a sound that did justice to this schizoid, noisy and extravagant capital, with music that exhibited, without any inhibition, these same characteristics."[69]

A similar opinion was given by Mexican journalist Oscar Adad, in reference to the 2014 edition of the Festival Distritofónico: "Bogota is a city of contrasts. . . . Hordes of wild cars, high decibels and continuous warnings of crime that rejoices with impunity in the streets . . . are part of the multicolored painting of the city. . . . And it is precisely among the urban chaos where ten years ago a group of young artists [La Distritofónica] decided to start composing new music for the city's soundtrack."[70]

Similar arguments could be made on behalf of the CCMC, as well as previous collectives and projects such as Radio Mixticius or Radio Pachone Internacional. Accordingly, it will be necessary to review the way in which the Distritofónica initiative has built an "aural signatura" of a particular Bogotá in the last ten years but understood as a liminal one. The group's work links with new aural and sonic experiences and, finally, it lays bare the political consequences of its aesthetic proposals in the long term.

In March 2012, Bogota was designated by UNESCO as a Creative City of Music, a title conferred given the diversity of musical expressions that circulate in the city, but which falls short thanks to the institutionalism that still governs the city's musical practices and which is based in educational academicism. This status is criticized by the collective La Distritofónica from its ontological transgressions in jazz and its versions of Bogotá, highlighting nominal problems in the city's cultural policy, its lack of openness to new artistic and musical proposals, and the necessary attention to the problem of the aural in all its dimensions: ecological, sociological, and anthropological.

## Notes

1. See Juan Carlos Franco, "Un breve recuento de la historia del jazz en Colombia," in *Jazz en español. Derivas hispanoamericanas*, ed. Julián Ruesga Bono (Veracruz, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013), 223–248; Juan S. Ochoa Escobar, "Los discursos de superioridad del jazz frente a otras músicas populares contemporáneas," *El artista*, no. 7 (2010): 11–27; Juan S. Ochoa, "El canon del jazz en Colombia: Una aproximación a través de artículos periodísticos," *Cuadernos de música, artes visuales y artes escénicas* 6, no. 1 (2011): 81–102.
2. Andrés Gualdrón, "Experimentaciones extremas: Se viene el Festival Distritofónico," *VICE*, October 11, 2014, https://www.vice.com/es/article/zndk9e/distritofnico.
3. The record label already has forty-one productions bringing together a variety of projects. It also produced its own Festival Distritofónico, now discontinued, which took place annually between 2012 and 2017. This event served as a platform for the collective's projects as well as other groups made up of local and foreign collaborators. See Diego Alberto Gómez, "El devenir de la música andina colombiana en el colectivo La Distritofónica: El caso del cuarteto de Ricardo Gallo: Diálogo entre tópicos, competencias y símbolos nacionales" (MA diss., Universidad de Chile, 2014).
4. This process of canonization of jazz in Bogotá only became visible in the 1990s with the creation of jazz programs in the music departments of some universities, such as the Universidad Pontificia Javeriana. Before that, the practice of jazz was open to different dialogues and characterized by amateurism and a musical scene that centered around certain bars and cafes. For more information, see Federico Ochoa Escobar, "Lineamientos para la educación musical superior a partir de las vidas y obras de Justo Almario y Antonio Arnedo. Una propuesta aplicada al área de saxofón del Conservatorio Adolfo Mejía (Cartagena, Colombia)," (PhD diss., Universidad de Antioquia, 2022).
5. This academicism is related to the educational background of most of the members of the collective, mainly its founder Alejandro Forero and the curator of the Festival Distritofónico, María Angélica Valencia. This training took place in one of the most important universities in the country: the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. It is in this academic and political context that the introductory and invitational text of La Distritofónica has a place. However, I would argue that the dialogue with sonorities and rhythms based on Colombian traditional music (mostly from the Caribbean) was central for the academic project beneath Javeriana's jazz program. As exemplified by the work of Antonio Arnedo (a central figure in this program) and bands in which Javeriano students played (i.e., polaroid), the program entailed a negotiation between the local (traditional music) and the global. For further information, see Ochoa Escobar, "Lineamientos para la educación musical superior."
6. A few terms in the table are worth particular note. "Transmilenio" refers to the urban public transportation system *par excellence* in Bogotá. "Tumbacatre" is an aphrodisiac beverage from the pacific coast of Colombia. "Candelaria" is one of the most iconic and touristic places of downtown Bogotá.
7. See Daniel Martin Feige, "Ontology of Improvisation and Jazz," in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Improvisation in the Arts*, eds. Bertinetto Alessandro and Marcello Ruta (New York: Routledge, 2022), 78.
8. If one wishes to appeal to the markers that "regulate" free jazz, the topic can be reviewed in Andrys Onsman and Robert Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz: Chasing Ideas* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2019) and Daniele Goldoni, "Forms of

Improvisation and Experimentalism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Improvisation in the Arts*, eds. Bertinetto Alessandro and Marcello Ruta (New York: Routledge, 2022), 243–258.

9. Lee Brown, David Goldblatt, and Theodore Gracyk, *Jazz and the Philosophy of Art* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), 181.
10. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 2.
11. Katya Mandoki, *Estética cotidiana y juegos de la cultura: Prosaica l* (México: Siglo veintiuno editores, 2006).
12. Goldoni, "Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism," 253.
13. According to Philip Tagg, "Musical communication works best when those at the emitting and receiving ends of the process share similar sociocultural norms and the same basic store of signs." In this sense I quote the author's treatment of the concept of intersubjectivity when he emphasizes that it "arises when at least two individuals experience the same thing in a similar way." Here we speak particularly of an urban sonosphere that is perceived in a similar way by subjects located in the city but who transit through particular aesthetic scenes or worlds, namely those of jazz and experimental music. See Philip Tagg, *Music's Meanings: A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos* (New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2013), 195–196.
14. Sam McAuliffe explains the nature of jazz from the ideas of the American philosopher Donald Davidson by expounding the ideas that the philosopher makes on the concept of the "principle of charity," a methodological resource that explains rationality in intersubjective communication. According to Davidson, the concept is "a prerequisite for understanding" (Davidson in McAuliffe, 24) and a "methodological presupposition that helps us to resolve interpretative difficulties" (24). In this sense, and through this concept, McAuliffe brings rationality and coherence to the practice of improvisation itself. Although his position is linguistic and therefore structuralist, the practical use of the resource is striking. In this order, he defends an ontology of jazz that differs from discursive analyses oriented toward prescriptive ontologies, understanding the phenomenon of improvisation as a space of dialogue and intersubjective consensus. This perspective happens to be quite useful for understanding the artistic endeavor of La Distritofónica. Sam McAuliffe, "Improvisation, Ontology, and Davidson: Exploring the Improvisational Character of Language and Jazz," *Context* no. 48 (2023): 21–33.
15. McAuliffe, "Improvisation, Ontology, and Davidson," 31.
16. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 31.
17. Goldoni, "Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism," 243; Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 17.
18. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4.
19. Goldoni, "Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism," 245.
20. See Natalia Bieletto-Bueno, "Regímenes aurales a través de la escucha musical: Ideologías e instituciones en el siglo xxi," *El Oído Pensante* 7, no. 2 (2019): 111–134; Goldoni, "Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism."
21. See Ana Alonso-Minutti, Eduardo Herrera, and Alejandro Madrid, *Experimentalisms in Practice: Music Perspectives from Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Feige, "Ontology of Improvisation and Jazz."
22. See https://ccmcmusica.com/ for further information.
23. According to one of its members, bass player Santiago Botero, MULA is defined as a "band that is torn between the intense sounds of punk noise, post rock and progressive rock, not without denying its free jazz and experimental avant-garde past" (see https://www.boterosantiago.com/mula for further information).

24. This refers to a quartet from Bogotá that played its debut performance at matik-matik—one of the city's iconic venues for jazz—on July 27, 2017. Their lovely, intimate recital established the group as a prime parlour music ensemble. The group exhibits musical habits that are concrete and surreal, drawing from movie soundtrack sounds, naive and playful chamber music, instrumental proto-rock with an experimental bend, and picturesque jazz. See https://duretdoux.bandcamp.com/album/odas-mixtas-para-criaturas-m-nimas for further information.
25. Feige, "Ontology of Improvisation and Jazz," 79.
26. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 21.
27. McAuliffe, "Improvisation, Ontology, and Davidson," 33.
28. Goldoni, "Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism," 250.
29. Hannaford in Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 32.
30. McAuliffe, "Improvisation, Ontology, and Davidson," 32.
31. See Feige, "Ontology of Improvisation and Jazz," 81.
32. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 22.
33. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 28.
34. Rosen in Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 25.
35. I bring these artists in the discussion because they were explicit influences for La Distritofónica. A broader discussion should include the influence of other free jazz styles in the Colombian context such as the work of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). My research did not reveal any direct nexus between La Distritofónica and the AACM.
36. Onsman and Burke, *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz*, 28.
37. David Novak, "Noise," in *Keywords in Sound*, eds. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 126.
38. Novak, "Noise," 126.
39. Greg Hainge, *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 14.
40. Hainge, *Noise Matters*, 16.
41. Brandon Labelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 222.
42. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 8.
43. See Natalia Bieletto-Bueno, *Ciudades vibrantes: Sonido y experiencia aural urbana en América Latina* (Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Mayor SpA, 2021). The notion of noise in this sense is understood as concomitant of a sonosphere—that is, "the perception of the set of audible sounds around us," according to Rainer Krause in the seminar "Historia del paisaje sonoro." It opens, naturally, questions of acoustemological order—as Steven Feld has argued in his article "Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea"—that respond to the "local conditions of acoustic sensation, knowledge, and imagination embodied in the culturally particular sense of place." In this sense, I argue that estesis (perception) and sense of place are concomitantly linked, i.e., the perception of a soundsphere conditions one's sense of place.
44. Fangfang Liu et al., "On the Definition of Noise," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communication* 9 (2022): 406.
45. World Health Organization, "Environmental Noise," in *Compendium of WHO and Other UN Guidance on Health and Environment, 2022 Update* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2022).

46. See Julian Arango, “Cartografías de la sorpresa: Prácticas artísticas y paisajes sonoros urbanos en Colombia,” *Cuadernos de Música, Artes Visuales y Artes Escénicas* 13, no. 1 (2018); Johana Molina and German Villalba “Estudio del ruido en la troncal Transmilenio tramo héroes—museo de oro como indicador de calidad del servicio y elemento urbano en el corredor” (undergraduate thesis, Universidad de La Salle de Bogotá, 2015); Alberto Ramírez and Efraín Domínguez, “Contaminación acústica de origen vehicular en la localidad de Chapinero (Bogotá, Colombia),” *Gestión y ambiente* 18, no. 1 (2015): 17–28; Andres Bustos, “Paisaje sonoro en la ciudad de Bogotá una aproximación a las características de frecuencia e intensidad del sonido en el espacio urbano” (undergraduate thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, 2013).

47. Alberto Ramírez and Efraín Domínguez further point out that “the Transmilenio system,” the main integrated transportation system of the city, “does not generate less noise pollution.” Ramírez and Domínguez, “Contaminación acústica,” 25.

48. “Primeromitiadocumental.Mp4.” YouTube video, June 24, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JP_wO2gPKuY&amp;list=PL77pyShP_CFCYsvX_5NoKoXogzGdUFroT.

49. Booklet of the album *Los Cerros Testigos*, 2005.

50. Interview with the quartet in LaMakinita. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QbrusAjFVGw.

51. Juan Manuel Toro, interview with author, October 22, 2014, Bogotá, Colombia.

52. Lawrence Zbikowski, “Metaphor in Music,” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, ed. Raymond Gibbs (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 504.

53. Zbikowski, “Metaphor in Music,” 510.

54. Zbikowski, “Metaphor in Music,” 511.

55. As may be intuited, this experience naturally exceeds the aural and surrounds sensory aspects in a holistic manner. For methodological and epistemological reasons, it will be understood that in the context of this article we are dealing exclusively with the aural condition, although it would be necessary to extend the discussion to the other senses.

56. Chambers quoted in Brett Lashua et al., *Sounds and the City: Popular Music Place and Globalization* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 2:2.

57. See John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Sound Tracks: Popular Music Identity and Place* (London: Routledge, 2003); Lily Kong, “Popular Music in Geographical Analyses,” *Progress in Human Geography* 19, no. 2 (1995): 183–198.

58. See Martin Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place* (Oxford, England: Berg, 1994).

59. See Bieletto-Bueno, *Ciudades vibrantes*.

60. Kohl in Hainge, *Noise Matters*, 16.

61. See Ana María Ochoa-Gautier, “Sonic Transculturation, Epistemologies of Purification and the Aural Public Sphere in Latin America,” *Social Identities* 12, no. 6 (2006): 803–825; Ana María Ochoa-Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

62. According to Ochoa-Gautier, entextualization is a form of transduction that produces written registers of sound. From this perspective I argue that the act of making music in La Distritofónica involves the transductive effect from sonosphere to music. See Ochoa-Gautier, “Sonic Transculturation,” 805.

63. Ochoa-Gautier, “Sonic Transculturation,” 805.

64. Ochoa-Gautier, *Aurality*, 21.

65. Composers such as Rodolfo Acosta or Sergio Cote, both members of the CCMC and living in Bogotá, critique this idea of “universal music” that is implied in the cultural policy

that guides the "Bogotá is" festivals. They refer to this "universality that it is coloniality" (Rodolfo Acosta) and that "homegenetizes and imposes the musical (producer, duration, sounds, genres, etc.)" leading to a norm that "institutionalizes [the music] from the State and the mechanisms of the capitalist machinery" (personal communications from both composers to the author).

66. See Ochoa-Gautier, "Sonic Transculturation."

67. Alejandro Forero, interview with author, July 20, 2014, Bogotá, Colombia.

68. Maria Angélica Valencia, interview with author, June 30, 2014, Bogotá, Colombia.

69. Andrés Gualdrón, "Experimentaciones extremas: Se viene el Festival Distritofónico."

70. Oscar Adad, "Festival Distritofónico 2014, diez años del colectivo La Distritofónica—Primera parte," *Voodoo Noise*, October 30, 2014, https://voodoonoise.wordpress.com/2014/10/30/festival-distritofonico-2014-diez-anos-del-colectivo-la-distritofonica-primera-parte/.

## Works Cited

Alegre González, Lizette. "Más allá de la abyección aural. Hacia una escucha híbrida de la diferencia." In *Sonido, escucha y poder*, edited by Lizette Alegre and Jorge García, 11–23. México City: Universidad Autónoma de México, 2021.

Alonso-Minutti, Ana, Eduardo Herrera, and Alejandro L. Madrid. *Experimentalisms in Practice: Music Perspectives from Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Arango, Julián. "Cartografías de la sorpresa: Prácticas artísticas y paisajes sonoros urbanos en Colombia." *Cuadernos de Música, Artes Visuales y Artes Escénicas* 13, no. 1 (2018).

Bertinetto, Alessandro, and Marcello Ruta. *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Improvisation in the Arts*. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Bieletto-Bueno, Natalia. *Ciudades vibrantes: Sonido y experiencia aural urbana en América Latina*. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Mayor SpA, 2021.

———. "Regímenes aurales a través de la escucha musical: Ideologías e instituciones en el siglo xxi." *El Oído Pensante* 7, no. 2 (2019): 111–134.

Bustos, Andrea. *Paisaje sonoro en la ciudad de Bogotá una aproximación a las características de frecuencia e intensidad del sonido en el espacio urbano*. Undergraduate thesis, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá, 2013.

Brown, Lee, David Goldblatt, and Theodore Gracyk. *Jazz and the Philosophy of Art*. London: Taylor and Francis, 2018.

Cardenas, Alejandra. *Border-listening/Escucha Liminal*. Vol. 1. Berlin: Radical Sounds Latin America, 2020.

Connell, John, and Chris Gibson. *Sound Tracks: Popular Music Identity and Place*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Feige, Daniel Martin. "Ontology of Improvisation and Jazz," in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Improvisation in the Arts*, edited by Bertinetto Alessandro and Marcello Ruta. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Feld, Steven. "Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea." In *Senses of Place*, edited by Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, 91–136. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996.

Franco, Juan Carlos. "Un breve recuento de la historia del jazz en Colombia." In *Jazz en español. Derivas hispanoamericanas*. Edited by Julián Ruesga Bono, 223–248. Veracruz, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013.

Goldoni, Daniele. “Forms of Improvisation and Experimentalism.” In *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy and Improvisation in the Arts*, edited by Bertinetto Alessandro and Marcello Ruta. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Gómez, Diego Alberto. “El devenir de la música andina colombiana en el colectivo La Distritofónica: El caso del cuarteto de Ricardo Gallo: Diálogo entre tópicos, competencias y símbolos nacionales.” MA diss., Universidad de Chile, 2014.

Hainge, Greg. *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.

Kong, Lily. “Popular Music in Geographical Analyses.” *Progress in Human Geography*, 19, no. 2 (1995): 183–198.

Kania, Andrew. “All Play and No Work: An Ontology of Jazz.” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 69, no. 4 (2011): 391–403.

Krause, Rainer. “Historia del paisaje sonoro.” Seminar *Paisaje Sonoro: Escucha, experiencia y cotidianidad*. Santiago de Chile: UAbierta, Universidad de Chile, 2018.

Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.

LaBelle, Brandon. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. 2nd ed. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

Lashua, Brett, Karl Spracklen, Stephen Wagg, and M. Selim Yavuz. *Sounds and the City: Popular Music Place and Globalization*. Vol. 2. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Liu, Fangfang, Shan Jiang, Jian Kang, Yue Wu, Da Yang, Qi Weng, and Chaowei Wang. “On the Definition of Noise.” *Humanities and Social Sciences Communication* 9 (2022): 406.

Mandoki, Katya. *Estética cotidiana y juegos de la cultura: Prosaica l*. México: Siglo veintiuno editores, 2006.

McAuliffe, Sam. “Improvisation, Ontology, and Davidson: Exploring the Improvisational Character of Language and Jazz.” *Context* 48 (2022): 21–33.

Molina, Johana, and Germán Villalba. *Estudio del ruido en la troncal Transmilenio tramo héroes—museo de oro como indicador de calidad del servicio y elemento urbano en el corredor*. Undergraduate thesis, Universidad de La Salle de Bogotá, 2015.

Novak, David. “Noise.” In *Keywords in Sound*, edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Ochoa Escobar, Federico. “Lineamientos para la educación musical superior a partir de las vidas y obras de Justo Almario y Antonio Arnedo. Una propuesta aplicada al área de saxofón del Conservatorio Adolfo Mejía (Cartagena, Colombia).” PhD diss., Universidad de Antioquia, 2022.

Ochoa Escobar, Juan Sebastián. “El canon del jazz en Colombia: Una aproximación a través de artículos periodísticos.” *Cuadernos de música, artes visuales y artes escénicas* 6, no. 1 (2011): 81–102.

———. “Los discursos de superioridad del jazz frente a otras músicas populares contemporáneas.” *El artista* 7 (2010): 11–27.

Ochoa-Gautier, Ana María. *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

———. “Sonic Transculturation, Epistemologies of Purification and the Aural Public Sphere in Latin America.” *Social Identities* 12, no. 6 (2006): 803–825.

Onsman, Andrys, and Robert Burke. *Experimentation in Improvised Jazz: Chasing Ideas*. New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2019.

Ramírez, Alberto, and Efraín Domínguez. “Contaminación acústica de origen vehicular en la localidad de Chapinero (Bogotá, Colombia).” *Gestión y ambiente* 18, no. 1 (2015): 17–28.

Ruesga Bono, Julián, ed. *Jazz en español. Derivas hispanoamericanas*. Veracruz, México: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013.

Stokes, Martin. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. Oxford: England: Berg, 1994.

Tagg, Philip. *Music's Meanings. A Modern Musicology for Non-Musos*. New York: Mass Media Music Scholars' Press, 2013.

World Health Organization. "Environmental Noise." In *Compendium of WHO and Other UN Guidance on Health and Environment, 2022 Update*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2022.

Zbikowski, Lawrence. "Metaphor in Music." In *The Cambridge Handbook of Metaphor and Thought*, edited by Raymond Gibbs. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

# Klezmer in My Life:
# Tyshawn Sorey
## *Interview about the Composer's Interest in Eastern European Jewish Klezmer and Cantorial Music*

*Interview by Mark Slobin*

Interviewer's note: I got to know Tyshawn Sorey as an MA student at Wesleyan University, where I taught. I was surprised to learn about his interest in "Yiddish" music, which peaked when he helped me with the music arrangements for a one-act play I wrote about the early Yiddish theater, which I was producing in the spring of 2011. I brought the well-known musicians Michael Winograd and Dan Blacksberg to campus for a class presentation, and Tyshawn asked to play along, which he did brilliantly, astonishing me.

Finally, in 2022, I thought to have a conversation on the record with Sorey about this interest. I have edited it only slightly for readability—excising the many "you knows" and "whatevers" that would clutter the page.

* * *

## Interview Recorded September 8, 2022

MARK SLOBIN (MS): When did you first hear about [klezmer]? When did you first run into it?

TYSHAWN SOREY (TS): I heard about it a lot actually through working with [John] Zorn and that circle of people. You know, being around people like Frank London, Ned Rothenberg, [and] Joey Baron. I've known those people for quite a long time. So a lot of how I learned about klezmer was basically through that circle, the Radical Jewish Culture circle of people, being around them. Going to Tonic [a club in New York], for example, when Tonic was open in the early 2000s, going to different shows [of their work] and stuff like that. Even seeing Zorn in various iterations of

© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

his own work like the Bar Kokhba Sextet, seeing that stuff. And later on hearing about "Kristallnacht" and how important that piece of music was [to] Zorn's own vocabulary. [I was] hearing about that great piece of music and just generally hearing a lot about the work that musicians in that circle had done. That kind of piqued my interest about it at the beginning.

Then, I guess, coming to Wesleyan years later [for my master's degree], that kind of renewed my interest. Getting to know Amanda [Scherbenske, Wesleyan graduate student and later TS's wife] and all the research she had already done on the transmission of klezmer and Jewish music and stuff like that, cantorial works. Seeing her CD collection was, I think, what kind of reconnected me back into that. [And] joining her klezmer ensemble got me into the actual music-making, of actually playing klezmer. Because I could do it before I had met Amanda and everything, but no one really associated me with that world. I was a jazz musician, quote unquote, interested in this other kind of music.

When I came upon Amanda's CD collection, she had been away for a number of days. She might have been in North Dakota or something like that. I kind of barged into her CD collection and listened to a lot of different things, including a lot of more documentary type things. I'll never forget listening to the Yiddish Radio Project, for example [produced by Henry Sapoznik for NPR], listening to not only just how hilarious some of the clips were that I heard in there [*laughs*], but getting an understanding of [the context] surrounding [it]. A lot of those programs back in the day [had] people like [Dave] Tarras and [Naftule] Brandwein and people like that being celebrated. Even though they were klezmorim, [other] music was in the air [as well]. Cantorial works, the golden age—all of that stuff was in the air in these broadcasts. So I said "OK, let me see what that's about" [*laughs*]. Of course, Amanda taught me a lot of tunes and stuff like that and she was the person that was responsible for my connection with Dan Blacksberg [trombonist in the klezmer scene] and Michael Winograd. But Dan Blacksberg was the person who got me further into it. And then from him I met Elaine Hoffman Watts [from a prominent Philadelphia klezmer family] and played with her after a while, and that was great. So my interest in klezmer actually was intensified ever since listening to the klezmer radio [*Yiddish Radio Project*] broadcasts and happening upon cantorial works . . .

I forgot to mention Judith Berkson and how important she was in my interest in this, and also Jacob Garchik, who's done a lot of work. But [it was] mainly through those experiences, meeting Dan Blacksberg and all those folks, and then meeting the New York circle of klezmer that got me more and more interested in actually playing the music. That's kind of what happened.

MS: But where did you get a chance to play?

TS: I guess professionally I had the chance to play [around] late 2009 I want to say, when I got a chance to play and attend ceremonies where that music was happening. [Events] where people would get together at weddings and stuff like that. So I started playing right around then. The more I became ingrained with that circle, the more I met people.

I met Benjy Fox-Rosen though Michael Winograd [*laughs*]. The way that they put it, they basically said that they kind of fooled me into a klezmer ensemble where we were reinterpreting [the music]. Benjy was setting—I think you know this recording—where Benjy was setting new music to Mordecai Gebirtig [Yiddish poet, songwriter], to his poetry. They were busy doing that. And while they were doing that, I'd be going to all these rehearsals and rehearsing with them and playing all these different styles. I already had a pretty good knowledge of what to do on the drum set and on the trombone when needed. [I was] able to play that style authentically and very well; I already [had] some knowledge of that. But then when I got together with them, they were taking this sort of new approach to dealing with just the genre of klezmer, deal[ing] with it as a musical genre. I remember one thing that Benjy said to me was, "All right, no woodblock. I don't want to hear any woodblock" [*laughs*]. I was curious—why did you say that? But I guess he had his own reasons for not wanting to include woodblock or whatever in some of his music. But I thought that was a very interesting remark that he made when I played woodblock.

MS: Maybe because it's a cliché.

TS: Exactly. It made me think about that sometime later. But we played several concerts as well with German Goldenshteyn's son [an iconic older klezmer from Moldova]. He came and sat in with us on a concert we did here in New York, in the big synagogue out here. I recall him sitting in with us just having a blast, with Michael, and Dan, and Avi Fox-Rosen, and Benjy Fox-Rosen, and we were all playing traditional klezmer music.

MS: I was really knocked out because I didn't know you could do that. When you did that in 2010, 2011 I was like, "Oh!"

TS: [*both laugh*] Thanks so much.

MS: And you did it so beautifully. I was like—this is amazing.

TS: Yes it was. I still like playing that music. I still listen to it pretty often, actually. It's kind of unfortunate I don't live in New York anymore [because I have fewer chances to play it now]. Like I was connected to that scene a little, and I'm no longer connected. The Philly scene—it's kind of—there's only a few people. Of course, there's Dan, who's holding down the fort, and Elaine [Hoffman Watts] has passed, and Susan [Watts] I haven't seen in a long time. I've yet to get familiar with some of the folks in Philly. But the New York klezmer people, they just kind of took me under their wing a little bit. They said, "Come with us." They knew that I was able to do this very well and everything. It just kind of went from there.

MS: It's kind of surprising. You went to traditional [klezmer] after starting with the Zorn crowd—that's going backward. Most people started traditional and then they went avant-garde.

TS: Right [*laughs*].

MS: So you were able to make a connection through your own music with the Zorn crowd. Because they were doing whatever you call that kind of [avant-garde klezmer] music and then you were able to find the source of it in the other direction.

TS: Have you ever heard Frank London's—what's it called—the Shekhinah Big Band? With me in it, though?

MS: I didn't know you were in that.

TS: Yeah, I did it at one time. This was right after moving to New York. This was probably 2013, 2014, I want to say. I did that project. Even to your point, about how shocked you were that I was able to do that: Frank London was super extremely surprised, to the point where he kept me in the drum chair for numerous weeks. We had a residency at the old Stone [on the Lower East Side]. Every Monday night the Shekhinah Big Band would be there; I think we were there for like two months, or something like that. A long time. Richie Barshay [drummer] did it. I forget who else did it, but I know Richie Barshay did it. And I was like "I can do this. Frank knows me, but he doesn't know I can do this." There happened to be a case where Richie couldn't make the gig. So I happened to be in the audience, and I said "Well look, if you want this band to sound good, you should hire me" [*laughs*]. That's what I told him. He said, "Oh yeah? Come next Monday." I showed up next Monday and it just kind of went from there. I did the rest of the residency for as much as I could.

MS: Musically, what drew you to this? Just simply musically. The social circle thing is really interesting, but what about the actual music itself?

TS: Musically, what attracted me to it was . . . can I talk about the cantorial works? Because the cantorial works is what really got me. When I would listen to the cantorial music it was almost like when I would listen to blues singers or things from the Mississippi Delta and that kind of stuff. In a way, a lot of the singing that the cantors did, all these wonderful melismatic phrases or whatever that were being sung, it reminded me very much of what the blues singers were doing, and people like that. So there was that connection to Black music, which I also happened upon in Amanda's CD collection. Just seeing the connection between what the cantors were doing and what was happening in Black music [was striking]. And that's not to mention what klezmers were doing along with the swing musicians. So there was that relationship, just the melismatic quality of the cantors is what really drew me into it. And then later on hearing how instrumentalists took that same concept, melismatic ornamentations or whatever that were being done. Like the *krekhts*. I didn't know what [that] was until we were playing that music. All of these different ornaments and different ways of phrasing the same traditional melody. How a musician like Brandwein, for example, would take this traditional Jewish melody [and] every time he did it, it would be so different from the last time he did it.

So [that was] how I was able to relate that to improvisation in my own field. This risk-taking, the melismatic nature of what was happening. That's what drew me to it at first.

MS: With Brandwein, there's this funny combination of precision with virtuosity. It's almost like jazz. And then you have this kind of funny affect too—of the slide, and the improvisatory thing—but it goes with this extreme precision.

TS: Yeah, there was definitely the precision too, for sure. That's also what I aspired to when playing the *bulgar*, when playing a *freylekhs*, when playing a *hora* exactly with the kind of precision that's necessary. But [I was] also maintaining this sort of improvisatory feeling behind it, this way of doing it, as opposed to this sort of mechanical way of doing things. Whenever I would listen to Elaine, for example, playing a *freylakh*, [I was amazed by] the way that she played it on a snare drum. Just the way she was able to execute that so well on the snare drum. Only she could do that, with that kind of precision, with that kind of attitude. And so I said to myself, well, how am I going to be able to achieve something like that if I want to do it so well musically and present [it] so that I feel like this is my voice, this is how I do that. It's almost as if whoever's playing that music, if they're playing an instrument, it almost sounds like they're singing. Like Dave Tarras. Even when I hear trombone players [like] Blacksberg play it, I almost think of him like singing the melody as opposed to literally [playing] the instrument. So how can I sing on the snare drum? How can I get that same kind of feeling playing this music with a drum set.

MS: You do that normally in your work, the way you do percussion. It's completely individual, so expressive.

TS: [*laughs*] Thanks so much.

MS: I'm not surprised. But that's interesting, that you got that sensibility out of it.

TS: Not to mention, these are different scales, different modes, different names for those modes, what they were used for. Of course, when I heard Zorn and those guys doing it, I said, "Oh, they're just playing off a Jewish scale, they're just playing off this or that, or whatever." And I'm thinking of jazz scales, just altering certain notes of that scale, that kind of thing. That was what I thought at first. It was very shallow the way I thought. But once I knew what these different prayer modes were and why they were done for specific songs and things like that, I began to understand a little better why musicians chose, why cantors chose to sing, why these Jewish melodies were composed in certain prayer modes. It just led me to further understand just why musicians and cantors chose to sing and play these songs.

MS: Is this the only kind of "European vernacular" music you've been interested in? Are you interested in other ones too?

TS: I'm interested in other ones, and actually curious to know what more of them are. But mainly klezmer was the thing that I listened to a great deal. And also a lot of Turkish music. That was another thing that I became very familiar with, right before I came to Wesleyan, became familiar with what was happening there.

MS: Well, there's some overlap there. There's always the question of the connection with Turkish music, certainly to Greek music.

TS: And Zoe Christiansen, she's kind of the person interested in making these connections between Turkish music and klezmer. Just finding these interesting connections and whatever. I don't know if you've heard her work yet. I met her actually through NEC [New England Conservatory], through Hankus [Netsky] and those people there. We've known each other now, I want to say, almost ten years. She was right there exploring Turkish music, just trying to find the common ground between what was happening.

MS: Turkish music was an old thing at NEC; originally [connected to] one of our Wesleyan grads, Bob Labaree.

TS: Really!

MS: Yeah, he did this dissertation on the connections between Gregorian melody and Turkish melody and stuff like that. He was at NEC for years; they've had an old story of bringing Turkish musicians in. Of course, Hankus encourages all that.

TS: Of course. Klez Kanada was also another big thing in a lot of ways, having gone to that. That also intensified my interest in this music and even [in] studying cantorial work more than I was familiar with. Like working with Jack Mendelson for that—that was great. He was very encouraging. Me and Anthony Russell were the only two Black people in the program, of course. I think you know Anthony Russell. Really good singer, awesome singer. Him and I connected, but then [it was] also me connecting with Jack, I think, that renewed my interested in working in cantorial works. Like literally singing these things in front of him, him giving me some pointers with pronunciation but also with certain melismatic things that he asked for. I'll never forget those experiences working with Jack. And also Pete Sokolow too [*laughs*]. As much of a character as he was, I really enjoyed my time with him too. I remember having to leave Klez Kanada really early because we had an emergency here at the house in New York, so I had to come home immediately, but I remember being in his ensemble. He was trying to keep me in there for a while because I guess he liked my playing, as critical as he is.

MS: That's for sure.

TS: And it was really meaningful to me to hear that he really liked my playing and hoped to see me again. I forgot to mention that to you, because I didn't know if you knew I went there or not. That was a big thing. That's how I really connected with Frank London. Because every night we'd be playing. Every night the musicians would be playing all night long and I remember Frank being part of those early things that we did, and after that is when the Stone stuff happened. My Klez Kanada experience with Frank London and with a lot of the other great players that came through there—that was really a remarkable time.

MS: So did you think of filtering all that sensibility into your own work?

TS: More now than I did back then, I think. A lot more now. When you saw Jen Shyu and I perform [at the old Stone], that kind of spirit, that feeling, that way of being, that's required in a situation like that. I'm not just putting on a hat. It's something you have to have ingrained in you in order to do really well. Doing that stuff with Jen Shyu kind of reminds me of those connections I had to klezmer early on. Where you're so immersed in it, you start to figure out your relationship to it. To engage with that in a feelingful and meaningful way.

MS: But you didn't want to pick up on that in the Rothko piece, I gather?

TS: [*laughs*] Definitely. Of course in the original Morton Feldman piece, with the quasi-Hebraic melody at the very end, that kind of reconnected me again. So it's all of these connections. It's quite something. I do feel I need to listen more. I don't get a chance—of course. We have a family of four now; I don't get to do as much listening as I used to. This conversation is inspiring me to pick things back up from where I left off with this.

MS: How nice. Do you mind if I put any of this out there anywhere?

TS: Not at all. Not at all. A lot of people don't know this [*laughs*]. I hope to stay engaged with it. Moving out of New York took me away with it. I have to get reconnected, reacquainted with the klezmer world out here. There's a lot of joy for me to play that music. Not only as a social activity but also as a musical activity that brings me to a spiritual place. It's a great thing to do.

# Poetry

## Sojourn

*Kira Tucker*

Grandmother, I visited Mississippi only once since
you left. My love drove me to the ocean, my first trip
not stopping down home. I cried passing Jackson

on 49. In ’49, you took the *City of New Orleans* north;
we almost rode that same train port-bound. Did you
ever go so deep south just to pace the beach? To eat,

you’d say, *in the street*: island food, beignets, tomatoes
so green, even in the coldest season? Or roam the Bay
Bridge in beach-blown sleeves, counting all the locks

other loves have left? Your grandbaby’s turned tourist
to our history, gotten myself lost in a homegoing haze.
Old Canton Road’s humming acres, Fairview’s sunrise

service, barbeques for Jubilee—it all, to me, means *you*.
I didn’t go for potbelly stoves, hickory seeds, or the wild
peas I’ve known only from family lore. I went to recover

our origins, an unfinished era where you could turn out
even a repast. I went to reprise that heartland of mothers’
board crowns and bone-deep hymns, though at the coast

now, Lover’s Lane is just a bayou backroad, overgrown
with mossy lawns and rebel signs. There, rings line light-
house walls, where memories of some storms still touch

everything. Not chasing loss at ponds or slots, we embraced
the mist of shore-slated waves. Seaside, it’s hard to lose
sense of direction—facing state’s end, that gulf so vast.

**Jazz & Culture** Volume 7, Number 1 Spring/Summer 2024
© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

# Reverie

## *after Deborah Paredez*

*Kira Tucker*

Don’t quit your day
dream come true; come live
the American job. Chase
your wet dreams. They’re made
of a midsummer night—and who
are you to disagree?

Believe in your sweet pipe team;
defer no lucid truth. Catch the fever
of your dreams. Never wake up and think
it was all a manic pixie teen machine.

A sea is the wish its waves make.
To follow my wildest ancestors,
perchance to have a dream—
a girl can only dare.

“Reverie” borrows from the Eurythmics’ 1983 single, “Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This),” and Walt Disney’s 1950 single, “A Dream Is a Wish Your Heart Makes,” performed by Ilene Woods as Cinderella.

# Antidote to Midnight Grief

*Kira Tucker*

Don’t let that nest of night sweat and terror trap you
beneath another dream in which they take her away.
Don’t pass another dawn gleaning the screen’s blue
light like dirt to bury the scenes behind your eyes.
Instead, revive your own reel of moments—recall
Grandma Hattie so alive she taught you how
to skip rope. Summer in South Memphis
meant you two in the fortress of her yard,
where she’d wind a line of cotton twine
around the steel fence post, looping it
through the chain-link lattice. As you
laced up the tangle at your feet, she tied
a knot where that third grip, of the sister
she’d wished you, might have been. Close
to takeoff, you’d stand beside the cord held
taut, feeling it graze an eager ankle. You’d wait
for her to whisk it into motion, with the same swish
you’d seen her whip eggs for cake or wield a switch
from branches this braided lifeline managed to brush,
too. Such rhythms of care trained your feet to sweep
on the upswing, knees quick, legs slick and glinting
bright as the sun blackening you both. She wrung
that rope so that you might learn to leap, to keep
from catching clotheslines or the skybound sole
of your shoe. Her patient laughter summoned
jump after jump, boundless but for that end-
of-August heat. Soon, as you began to lose
pace, grandmother’s muscles would slow
the arc orbiting your body back to rest.
Let Hattie’s lesson revisit you tonight:
how to turn what we most seem to lack
into a life-giving ritual that lets the lost
endure. Remember this if ever you wake
to feel yourself standing again at that open
gate, still expecting a pair of careful hands—
as if retiring a rope aground—to ease it shut.

# Contributors to This Issue

**KEHINDE ALONGE** is an English PhD candidate at Rutgers University. His interest lies in the intersection between twentieth-century experimental Black poetics and Black music (i.e., free jazz and the rise of the Black Arts Movement). Alonge is working on a dissertation that grapples with the aesthetics and politics of Black arts collectives before and after the Black Arts Movement and explores how our archival practices can honor their work's commitment to improvisation, free play with temporality, and dispossession. Beyond his scholarly work, he hopes his research will also make the case for making archives of Black art accessible to Black diasporic communities outside of academic institutions.

**DIEGO ALBERTO GÓMEZ NIETO** is a research professor at the Fundación Universitaria Juan N. Corpas in Bogotá, Colombia, where he leads the research group "Crearte" and directs the Musicology Department of the School of Music. He is a guitarist and received a master's degree in musicology from the University of Chile. His research is related to the subject of experimental music in the city of Bogota and artistic research in Latin America from the perspective of sound studies and musical semiotics. He is a member of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Latin American branch (IASPM-AL).

**MIKI KANEDA** is a scholar whose work centers on themes of transcultural movements and the entanglements of race, gender, and empire in experimental, avant-garde, and popular music. Her recent projects examine the connections between

Downloaded from http://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/uip/jac/article-pdf/7/1/114/2113519/114contributors.pdf by UNIV PITTSBURGH user on 12 July 2024

© 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois

musical performance and labor in contemporary new music. Her book, *Transpacific Experimentalisms: Intermedia in 1960s Japan*, is forthcoming from University of Michigan Press. She is associate director of the Center for the Humanities at New York University.

**MARK SLOBIN** is the Winslow-Kaplan Professor of Music Emeritus at Wesleyan University and the author or editor of many books on Afghanistan and Central Asia, eastern European Jewish music, film music, American music, and ethnomusicology theory, two of which have received the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award: *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World* and *Tenement Songs: Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants*. He has been president of the Society for Ethnomusicology and the Society for Asian Music. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He retired in 2016 after forty-five years at Wesleyan and lives in Manhattan.

**TYSHAWN SOREY** is a MacArthur Fellow, United States Artists Fellow, and Pulitzer Prize finalist whose topics of interest center on twentieth-century music, spontaneous composition, and Afrodiasporic creative music performance practices. He is Presidential Professor of Music and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

**KIRA TUCKER** (she/they) is a poet and visual artist from Memphis, Tennessee, and a recent graduate from Northwestern University (MA, MFA). A recipient of fellowships and support from the Mellon Foundation, the Sewanee Writers' Conference, Tin House, Fernland Studios, and the Hurston/Wright Foundation, Kira currently serves as assistant managing editor for *TriQuarterly*. Her poems appear in *Tupelo Quarterly*, the *Spectacle*, *Jazz & Culture*, and elsewhere. Kira is now at work on her hopeful debut book collection—a poetic investigation spanning the mythos of the American Dream and the landscapes of our collective unconscious.

**TOM WETMORE** is lecturer-in-discipline in the Department of Music at Columbia University as well as an active pianist, composer, and bandleader based in New York City. His music has been described as "quintessentially chill" and "unique and strangely affecting" (*Jazz Times*). Dr. Wetmore's research specialties include jazz, Black sound studies, African American and Afrodiasporic musics, and science, technology, and society. While editor-in-chief of *Current Musicology*, he edited numerous general issues as well as the special issue *Sounding the Break: Music Studies and the Political* (2018). He also coedited the special issue *Black Sound Studies* (2017). He received his PhD from Columbia University.

Downloaded from http://scholarlypublishingcollective.org/uip/jac/article-pdf/7/1/114/2113519/114contributors.pdf by UNIV PITTSBURGH user on 12 July 2024

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

*American* MUSIC

A quarterly journal devoted to all aspects
of American music and music in America

*American Music* is an independent, peer-reviewed journal.

Its articles, reviews, and special issues are devoted to American music in the broadest sense, including musical practices of North, South, and Central America as well as American musics performed anywhere in the world.

**Edited by:**
Nancy Yunhwa Rao

AMERICAN
MUSIC
VOLUME 41
NUMBER 1
SPRIN

**CLICK OR SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION**
https://go.illinois.edu/AM

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS**
www.press.uillinois.edu
journals@uillinois.edu
(217) 333-0950

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS**

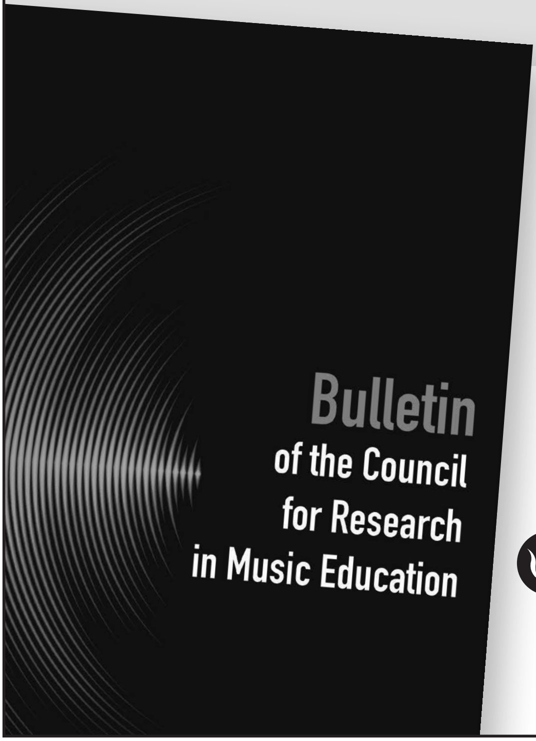
# Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education

The *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* provides a forum where contemporary research is made accessible to all with interest in music education.

The *Bulletin* contains current research, and reviews of interest to the international music education profession.

The *Bulletin* provides an outlet for scholarly publication and is one of music education's leading publications.

**Edited by:**
Janet R. Barrett



**CLICK OR SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION**
https://go.illinois.edu/BCRME

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS**
www.press.uillinois.edu
journals@uillinois.edu
(217) 333-0950

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS**

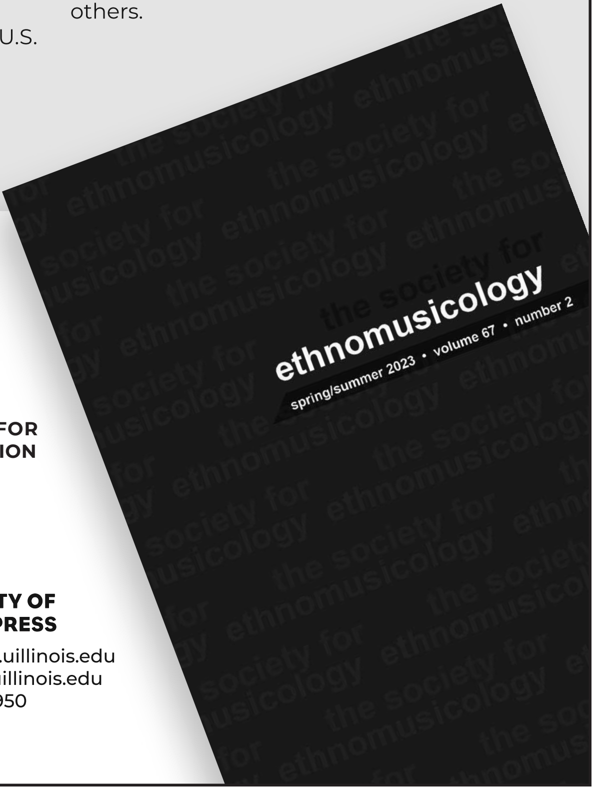
# Ethnomusicology

The journal's scholarly articles represent current theoretical perspectives and research in ethnomusicology [illegible] fields, expanding the discipline in the U.S. and beyond.

*Ethnomusicology* is aimed at a diverse audience [illegible] musicians, and others.

This inclusive journal also features [illegible] multimedia reviews.

**Edited by:**
[illegible]


the society for
ethnomusicology
spring/summer 2023 • volume 67 • number 2

**CLICK OR SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION**
[illegible]

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS**
www.press.uillinois.edu
journals@uillinois.edu
(217) 333-0950

*Jazz and Culture* is a biannual publication devoted to publishing cutting-edge research on jazz from multiple perspectives. Founded on the principle that both scholars and musicians offer invaluable contributions, the journal juxtaposes groundbreaking work by researchers alongside oral histories and articles written by master artists in the field. All methodological approaches are welcome, including ethnomusicology, music theory, and critical and cultural studies. The journal particularly encourages work relating to jazz's international scope.

### Manuscript Submissions

In general, *Jazz and Culture* will follow the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th edition, for all style decisions. Citations will be formatted as endnotes using the Notes-Bibliography style, given in the manual. Manuscripts should be prepared as Microsoft Word files, double spaced in 12 point font. Please see the full *Jazz and Culture* manuscript preparation guidelines here: https://www.press.uillinois.edu/journals/?id=jac

Article submissions may be made by sending your article via email to *pittjazz@pitt.edu*. Please include the subject line: "Jazz and Culture: Article Submission."

All submissions should include the following as separate files:

- Article manuscript, with no identifying information regarding the author.
- Separate information sheet including (1) Author's name, contact information, and mailing address (2) Article Title and 250 word abstract (3) Author bio of 100 words or less, beginning with institutional affiliation.

Any questions may also be emailed to *pittjazz@pitt.edu*.

---

This publication is made possible through generous gifts from the
Erroll Garner-Martha Glaser Foundation, the University of Pittsburgh Year of Diversity, and
through ongoing support of Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.

Garner-Glaser
Foundation, Inc.

YEAR OF
DIVERSITY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
The DIETRICH School of
Arts & Sciences

## ARTICLES

**Archival Absences and Conditional Listening: How Jazz Shaped Experimental Music in 1960s Japan**
*Miki Kaneda*

**“A Meditation Among Drums”: A Black Archive of Wandering at the *Milford Graves: Fundamental Frequency* Exhibit**
*Kehinde Alonge*

**“Jazz Steel”: The Vibrancy of Rooms and the Acoustics of Genre at Jazz at Lincoln Center**
*Tom Wetmore*

**!We Are Not Jazz¡ Liminal Jazz in the Music of La Distritofónica, Bogotá, Colombia**
*Diego Alberto Gómez Nieto*

## ORAL HISTORY

**Klezmer in My Life: Tyshawn Sorey**
*Interview by Mark Slobin*

## POETRY

**Sojourn**
**Reverie**
**Antidote to Midnight Grief**
*Kira Tucker*

UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS PRESS

2578-4765